



“The Passover and the Lord’s Supper”

Part II

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The death of the firstborn was the last of the plagues that God sent upon Pharaoh and the land of Egypt in order to free His people from Egyptian bondage in the long, long ago. God swept through the land on the wings of death that night, striking the firstborn of every house except for the Hebrews, who were safely dwelling in a house marked by the blood of a Passover lamb. When Pharaoh found his own son dead that night, he told Moses and Aaron to get their people out of his country. So in great haste, they all fled to the Red Sea, where God parted the waters and led them across. The scripture later says that they were *baptized unto Moses in the cloud and the sea* that night (**I Corinthians 10:2**). Having come forth on the shore of deliverance, a nation was born.

God wanted them as a people to always remember how He had brought them out of Egypt, and to anticipate the day when the lamb of God would be sent into the world to take away its sin. So, God made the Passover a memorial feast to be observed every year throughout their generations as a nation.

Exodus 12:24-27 “And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses...”

This they were to do as long as they remained a nation in the eyes of God. But in the last days of the Jewish nation, Jesus observed the Passover with His disciples one last time in an upper room in Jerusalem. It was the night before His crucifixion and He used the feast with which they were familiar to introduce them to a new feast that would soon hold great significance to them as people redeemed by

Christ. He showed them how to observe the Lord's Supper. You see, the Passover had pointed *forward* to the cross, and now the communion would point Christians *back* to the cross.

So, there is a close relationship between the Passover of the Jews and the communion now within the church. One teaches us some important lessons about the other. Let's continue our study of these two sacred feasts.

In some respects, Jewish life revolved around the Passover. It certainly commemorated the single event that led to the birth of Israel as a nation. It marked the beginning of the Jewish year and it is perhaps the most vivid picture in the Old Testament economy of the death of Jesus to take away the sin of man. The Passover meal and feast of unleavened bread that followed each year after the exodus from Egypt was a very powerful reminder, not only of their deliverance from Egypt, but it was a star of hope that one day they would be delivered from the condemnation of sin.

I Corinthians 5:7 "...For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

The observance of the Passover is not part of the Christian dispensation or the religious lives, particularly of Gentiles, in the church. It was fulfilled in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. There's no need to observe the Passover today as the Jews of old did.

In **I Corinthians 5** however, Paul refers to another feast that we ARE to keep. Today, faithful Christians regularly observe the Lord's Supper as a memorial to the death of Jesus. The Passover was not the Lord's Supper, and the Lord's Supper is not the Passover. But they are very closely related. One is a symbol of the lamb who was to come, and the other is a symbol of the lamb who came. Just as God's people under the Old Testament were given a feast to remember by, so God's people living now under the new covenant have been given a feast to remember by. Jesus used His last observance of the Passover meal with His Jewish disciples to establish the observance of the new meal to be kept by Christians—Jew or Gentile—until He comes again.

In our study last time, we looked at the *perpetuity* of both feasts; how God ordained that the Passover was to be kept perpetually throughout the history of the Jewish nation each and every year. By so doing, they would signify to the generations that were to come what God did for them in saving them from Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb. Likewise, Jesus decreed that His disciples were to often and regularly assemble together to observe the Lord's Supper. Paul records the words of Jesus:

I Corinthians 11:26 "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

You see, the Jews could not simply observe the Passover whenever they pleased or however often they desired. They were to observe it regularly, on a certain day, at a certain time, and they were to do so each year. It's interesting that God didn't say to observe it every year. But they well understood that that's what God was instructing them to do. They well understood that when God instructed them on the 14th day of the month of Abib (the first month) to kill a lamb and eat the Passover, that every year had a first month, and every first month had a 14th day, and that was the Passover and they were to observe it.

The scripture tells us that the early church *steadfastly* continued in the breaking of bread.

Acts 2:42 “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...”

The first day of the week was the day in which Christ was raised from the dead, and just as the Passover marked the night the Jewish nation was born, so the first day of the week marks the day that spiritual Israel, the church of Christ, was born: the Day of Pentecost, which fell on a Sunday or Lord's Day. Since every week has a first day, we meet each and every first day of the week since it is the Lord's Day to observe the Lord's Supper. Not once a year, not once a quarter or once a month or whenever it might suit us, but on each Lord's Day we remember the death of Jesus by communing together in each local congregation of the Lord's church. It is very important that the Lord's Supper be observed perpetually. I want us to spend a few moments today looking at the *purpose* of the Passover and of the Lord's Supper. Each one was established as a pattern for the generations following to very closely adhere to. I realize that it's common for people today to think that there really is no pattern for the observance of the Lord's Supper. But that's not what the scriptures teach. When Jesus observed the Lord's Supper with His disciples, He very carefully took a loaf of bread. That was not happenstance. It was by divine design. He took that loaf of bread and blessed it, partook of it and gave it to His disciples and told them to eat of it. We know that He took a single loaf of bread because the Greek word for *bread* is *artos*, which literally means *a loaf*. We know that it was unleavened bread because this took place during the feast of unleavened bread, among other reasons. In the same way that Jesus took bread and shared it with His disciples, He also took a cup of fruit of the vine. We know that it was unfermented fruit of the vine because there was to be no leaven or fermentation in their houses during the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. He blessed that cup of fruit of the vine and gave it to them and commanded them to all drink of it. The Lord was establishing a pattern, because He then said, “*this do in remembrance of Me.*” We sometimes see that written across the front of communion tables. Think about what He was saying. He didn't just say *remember Me*. He said, “*This do,*” or “*Do this*” in remembrance of Me. Do what? Well, what He had just done before them. In other words, Jesus was providing them with an example. He was establishing a pattern.

The apostle Paul was not a disciple of Jesus at that time, so later, Christ revealed to him by inspiration what took place there in Jerusalem that night. Paul, when correcting the problems at Corinth on this and other issues, wrote this:

I Corinthians 11:2 “...keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”

In other words, there is a way to observe the Lord's Supper, and it is just how Christ instituted it; then, received by Paul and in turn delivered unto them. He reveals that pattern in **I Corinthians 11:23-26**. That really shouldn't seem strange to us, because God was very specific about how the Jews were to observe the Passover. The family couldn't eat beef or some other kind of meat. They couldn't go in and bake a cake and use that. They couldn't determine what they would use in order to commemorate the exodus from Egypt; God Himself set the table, as it were. They didn't dare change or rearrange what God had decreed. They were to choose a lamb, without spot or blemish.

Exodus 12:5 “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:”

God was very particular about that. Why? because it typified Christ, who would be the perfect lamb of God.

John 1:36 “And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!”

A blemished lamb would not do, in order to picture our Lord. Also, that lamb was to be killed at a certain time: in the evening. Why? Jesus would be slain late in the day. Not a single bone of the paschal lamb was to be broken. Why? because not a single bone was to be broken when Jesus was crucified.

John 19:36 “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.”

The meal was to be eaten without leaven. In fact, there was to be no leaven in the house. It was all to be removed and the house swept and cleaned. Why? Leaven represents corruption and sin, just as Christians today are to be free of the leaven of malice and hypocrisy at the table of the Lord (**I Corinthians 5:7-8**). The entire lamb of the Passover was to be eaten and none could be left. Why? Jesus is to be wholly received as the sacrifice for the believer today. There was only to be one lamb per house. They could not use two or three lambs, but only one lamb. If there were too many people in a house to share one lamb, they were to go to another house and eat there. If there were not enough to consume one lamb, they were to join with their neighbors and consume the meal with them. There had to be only one lamb per house. You see, God was particular about all of that because the typology and symbolism had to be perfect and it had to be complete.

All of these things were significant and they were to be done exactly as Moses prescribed. Why? Because of what they symbolized. The feast symbolized Jesus. It symbolized their deliverance from Egypt by means of the Passover. It symbolized the covenant that God had with them. God made the covenant with Abraham long before, four hundred and some years before, but it was now being fulfilled in their birth as a nation when on the Passover, they left Egypt. This feast was a powerful reminder of that covenant. In fact, only those who were included in that covenant could even eat the Passover.

Exodus 12:43-44 “And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.”

This is a point that is often overlooked. Not only was the observance of the Passover a demonstration of their covenant relationship with God, but it symbolized their unity as God's people, who were participants in that covenant. Renowned and respected scholars of the Old Testament Keil and Delitzsch said that *‘through the unity and integrity of the lamb given them to eat, the participants were to be joined unto an undivided unity and fellowship with the Lord, who had provided them with the meal.’* The unbroken lamb, you see, was a picture of their oneness as a people in a covenant relationship to God. Fast forward to the Lord's Supper. It too is to be done according to a specific pattern. That pattern is specific and essential to a rightful observance of the communion because it very carefully and precisely portrays the facts of Calvary as they relate to the church. There is a reason that Jesus used one loaf of unleavened bread and they all partook of it: it represents His unbroken body. In turn, it represents that His body, the church, is one. There is a reason that Jesus used one cup of fruit of the vine instead of each having his own cup: it represents the covenant that we now have through Jesus our Lord. I know that people will argue that Jesus said, according to Luke's account, *take this and divide it among yourselves.* But Mark, in his account, explains to us how they divided that which was given to them.

Mark 14:23 “And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.”

That word *of* comes from the Greek word *ek*, which means *out of*. They all drank *out of* what Jesus gave to them. There’s no doubt that Jesus shared a common vessel of fruit of the vine with His disciples. With that in mind, read what Paul says to the church at Corinth.

I Corinthians 10:16-17 “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

The word *communion* is significant. The translated word *communion* points to a *common union*. That’s an appropriate translation because the Greek word that Paul used and that was translated as *communion* means *a partnership, a fellowship, a participation*. That’s the beauty of the Lord’s Supper, just as it was the beauty of the Passover to the Jews. As each household came together around the paschal lamb, a beautiful and touching picture was painted of their oneness as a people who had a covenant with the Lord, that the Lord was now ready to unfold before them.

Likewise, today, when each congregation of Christ’s church comes together each Lord’s Day, an even more beautiful picture is painted, when we show forth the Lord’s death, and in so doing we show the oneness that we have in Christ Jesus in the new covenant that Jesus established and ratified with His blood. It is such a beautiful picture, if we don’t corrupt it.

In the religious world today, what we really have amounts to “individual communion.” And you can’t have individual communion any more than a Jew could have individual Passover. The very design of the Lord’s Supper as Jesus instituted it is the same as the design of the Passover. Just as they were to share the lamb, so the Lord’s disciples today are to share the bread and the cup of the fruit of the vine. The very design of the Lord’s Supper reflects our communion in Christ just as much as God’s design in the Passover pictured their unity as a people under the old covenant.

Some will say that the Lord’s Supper merely pictured the body and blood of the Lord, but that’s not true. It’s commonly affirmed, but it’s not true. Look closely, because there are three things pictured in the communion: the body of Christ, the blood of Christ and the new covenant that Christ ratified or made of force by His blood. The new covenant and the blood of Jesus are NOT the same thing. They cannot be separated but they are not the same. There is something in the Lord’s Supper that represents the Lord’s body. There is something in the Lord’s Supper that represents the blood of Jesus. And there is something in the Lord’s Supper that represents the new covenant, the new agreement. Well, what are those elements that represent those three things? If you’ll carefully read what Jesus did and said when He instituted the supper, you’ll find it.

Luke 22:19-20 “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

Jesus said that the cup was the New Testament. What was IN the cup that Jesus used? Fruit of the vine. What does Matthew say about the fruit of the vine?

Matthew 26:27-29 “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

You see, there are three elements spoken of in the observance of the Lord’s Supper. When you harmonize the accounts of the synoptic gospels together, which you must do, you get a full picture of what Jesus did and what He said. He took bread, which is to us His body. He took a cup, which is to us the new covenant that is ratified by His blood, represented by the fruit of the vine that we drink from that cup that we share. That’s how the Lord instituted the Lord’s Supper.

Within the last one hundred to one hundred and fifty years, unfortunately men have changed the practice from that which Christ instituted to something else, and the symbolism is destroyed. Someone will object and say, *if we must use one loaf and one cup as Jesus did, then don’t we have to use the same loaf and the same cup as Jesus did?* No, no more than the Jews had to go back and use the same lamb. Each house simply used *a lamb* that met the specifications of Moses as a symbol. There is no power or significance in the *actual* bread, cup or fruit of the vine that Jesus used with His disciples in Jerusalem. But the Lord was establishing a *pattern*. He was establishing symbols for these three things to be used whenever and wherever disciples would meet to remember His death.

Someone says *but isn’t one loaf and a common cup impractical? What if the church is large?* Well, we learn in the Passover that you don’t adjust the meal to fit the assembly; you adjust the assembly to fit the meal. The pattern didn’t conform to the circumstance; the circumstance was to conform to the pattern. If there were too many, they were to go to another house. If there weren’t enough, they were to join together.

Someone says *then wouldn’t the church all over the world have to have only one loaf and one cup?* No, no more than the Jews the world over had to have only one lamb. It was to be one lamb not for one person, and not one lamb for the whole nation. Rather, one lamb for each household gathered to observe the feast. In the same way, communion is not an exercise of the individual, nor is it the function of the universal church. It is the practice of each autonomous local congregation of believers who meet together for worship.

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