

Communion

Lesson 1

Matt 26:17-20 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. KJV

I. The Context: Passover

- a. The specific Hebrew word for Passover is not in other Semitic languages, and is only found in passages derived from the Hebrew Bible. However, there is an Egyptian word which carries the idea of Passover and means "to extend the arms or wings over one protecting him."
- b. A proper understanding of Passover suggests not so much the passing by of the death angel but the passing so as to shield over. Isa 31:5. *as birds flying so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also He will deliver it, passing over He will preserve it.*
- c. Jesus expressed this same idea in Matt 23:37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! KJV*
- d. In the comment of Jesus, the use of the Greek word in our English translation is episonagon. The "epi" expresses the hen's brooding over her chickens, the "sun" her gathering them together.
- e. Another example of this idea can be seen in Deut 32:11 *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. KJV*
- f. The idea of Passover is also reflected in the book of Ruth. Ruth 2:12 *The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. KJV*
- g. In a prophetic example of David as the type of Christ, we see a picture of the ultimate passing over. 2 Sam 24:16-17 *And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite. And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house. KJV*
- h. So, in this example, Jehovah is the protector from the destroying angel, and interposes between him and the people while David (Christ) directly intercedes on our behalf.
- i. From the Biblical narrative we see that the Passover is the chief historical annual festival of the Jews. It was kept in remembrance of the Lord's passing over the houses of the Israelites when the first born of all the Egyptians were destroyed. Ex 12:13-14 *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever. KJV*
- j. The seven days preceding the Passover is referred to as the "feast of unleavened bread" because during its celebration, no leavened bread was to be eaten or even kept in the household Ex 12:18-20 *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread. KJV*
- k. In early Christian centuries the Passover became connected with the lamb that was slain, (the pascha) with the Greek word Pascho, "to suffer", and the word was taken to refer to Good Friday rather than the Jewish Passover. 1 Cor 5:7-8 *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. KJV*

II. The Practice

- a. A detailed account of the institution of this feast is given in Ex 12 and 13. It was afterwards incorporated in the ceremonial law (Lev 23:4-8) as one of the great festivals of the nation of Israel.
- b. Over the centuries, many changes seem to have taken place in the way it was celebrated when compared with its first celebration. (comp. Deut 16:2,5,6; 2 Chron 30:16; Lev 23:10-14; Num 9:10,11; 28:16-24).
- c. By New Testament times, the use of wine had been introduced as well as the sauce with the bitter herbs, and the service of praise. John 13:26 *Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. KJV*
- d. There is recorded only one celebration of this feast between the Exodus and the entrance into Canaan, namely, that mentioned in Numbers 9:5. *And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. KJV*

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- e. During the Passover celebration, **Jerusalem**, in the time of our Lord was described as: "*The city itself and the neighborhood became more and more crowded as the feast approached, the narrow streets and dark arched bazaars showing the same throng of men of all nations as when Jesus had first visited Jerusalem as a boy.*"
- f. Even the **temple** itself, was transformed into something like our State Fair rather than a holy place.
 - 1. In parts of the outer courts a wide space was covered with **pens** for sheep, goats, and cattle to be used for offerings.
 - 2. Sellers attempted to entice buyers to their stalls by **shouting** out the quality of their beasts; sheep bleated, oxen lowed. Sellers of doves also had a place set apart for them to hawk their offerings.
 - 3. Potters invited **customers** into their booths where they offered a choice from huge stacks of clay dishes and ovens for roasting and eating the Passover lamb and for wine, oil, salt, and all else needed for sacrifices.
 - 4. Stalls to **change** foreign money into the shekel of the temple, which alone could be paid to the priests, were numerous, the whole confusion made the sanctuary like a noisy market and invited the ire of Jesus. *Matt 21:10-13 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.KJV*

III. Symbolic Meaning

- a. Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery and adoption by Jehovah was **sealed** by the Passover, which was emblematic of their consecration to Him. In like manner our Paschal lamb seals us to Christ.
- b. The seven days' "feast of unleavened bread" points to the fact that the leavening of the corruption of sin and, like the setting of the dough in fermentation; was **excluded** from those who would bring their sacrifices.
- c. Jesus spoke frequently using the **symbolism** of leavening when referring to the religious leaders of his day as he pointed out their hypocrisy and misleading doctrine. *Matt 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? KJV*
- d. The unleavened loaves, called "bread of affliction" served to remind the people of past affliction and symbolized the **new life** cleansed from the leaven of the old Egyptian-like nature, just as believers are to be cleansed of their past propensity to sin. *1 Cor 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth .KJV*
- e. Just as the Passover was a kind of sacrament, uniting the nation to God on the ground of God's **grace** to them, so, we too are united to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"
- f. The sacrifice was first **God's sacrifice**, then, on the ground of that, the seven days' feast of unleavened bread to show they walked in the strength of the pure bread of a new life, in fellowship with Jehovah. *Ex 23:18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. KJV*
- g. The whole feast was primarily a commemorative ordinance, but it was also a type of the great deliverance wrought by the Messiah for all his people from the doom of death on account of sin, and from the bondage of sin itself. Hence the Passover is a fitting context for the celebration of **communion**. *1 Peter 1:19-23 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. KJV*

IV. Application

- a. The most important and eternally significant question: Is Christ your Passover protector who will deliver you from the second death?
- b. Think deeply: Is the Communion service merely something that you habitually do on the first Sunday of every month without giving it much thought? Are you missing something in your practice of Communion?
- c. What can you do to ensure that your Communion service is actually the profoundly meaningful event that it was intended to be?