



“The Passover and the Lord’s Supper”

**Part III
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It’s a great privilege for me to be able to study the word of God with you for a few minutes today. We’ll continue our look at the ancient Passover and its fulfillment today in the kingdom of the Lord. We’ve been comparing the Passover with its paschal lamb to the death of Jesus on Calvary and the Lord’s Supper, which commemorates His death. Jesus revealed the common link between these two respective ordinances--one given to the Jews of old, and the other given to the church today--when He observed the last Passover with His disciples and at that time instituted the sacred feast for new covenant believers.

Luke 22:15-20 “And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 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.”

We left off our study the last time talking about the rich symbolism contained in the elements of the Passover and in the design of the Lord’s Supper. How the Lord set *both* tables: not leaving it up to the Jews of old to observe the Passover in any way they saw fit; neither leaving it up to the church today to observe the Lord’s Supper any way we may choose. *Both* were perpetuated by a *pattern* originally given. We’ll continue this line of thought in today’s study.

The Passover which enabled the Jews to leave Egypt, become a nation and go on to inherit the land of promise, was perhaps the most powerful and central event in their history. It clearly pointed ahead in

time to Christ Jesus, our Passover lamb, whose blood saved us from death and destruction, and empowers us to be saved and set apart, and gives us the hope of eternal life. The Passover meal was ordained by God for the Jews to keep down through the years, throughout their generations as a nation. So every time they slew a paschal lamb at the beginning of each new year, they remembered how God had brought them out of Egypt, given birth to them as a nation, set them toward the land of Canaan, thus initiating the fulfillment of the great promise He had made to their father, Abraham. They were to observe this every year so long as they were a nation. They were to do so according to the strict pattern that God gave to Moses and Aaron, according to **Exodus 12**. An unblemished male lamb was to be chosen, and on the evening of the 14th day that lamb was to be killed. Its blood was to be spread on the upper and side doorposts of each house—not the roof, not the walls, but the doorposts. The family was to gather inside the house where they would together consume the lamb with bitter herbs. There was to be nothing left that wasn't burned with fire. There was to be one lamb per house—not two, not three, not however many they thought the circumstance called for, but only one.

Keep in mind, my friend, that the pattern always determines the circumstance; the circumstance doesn't determine or alter the pattern, because back then, if there were not enough in the house to consume a whole lamb, they were to join with their neighbors and share a lamb. If there were too many to share one lamb, then some were to leave and go join with another house and eat the Passover with them. They were to adjust the size of the house to fit one lamb. One lamb allowed per dwelling. God was very particular about that. Why would He be so strict concerning that? Why not two lambs? Why not as many lambs as the gathering perhaps called for? Well, you see, all of this is because of what each aspect of the Passover *symbolized* to them. If they changed the *meal*, then they changed the *meaning*. For example, the lamb had to be unblemished because it was a type or symbol of Jesus Christ, the spotless lamb of God, who would one day take away the sin of the world. The lamb was to slay in the evening of the 14th day. Why? to picture what would take place when Jesus was crucified in the evening. The lamb could not be divided because it pictured the body of Jesus, who would not have one bone broken in His crucifixion, fulfilling an important prophecy and painting a powerful picture. They were to come together and consume one lamb because their oneness and brotherhood as the family of God was seen in this memorial meal.

So, as each family gathered in each dwelling and the table was set with the things that God had decreed, a beautiful picture was painted before them. If any of these things were changed, that picture was corrupted. It was a perpetual memorial, perpetuated by conforming to a pattern that God had given them for a purpose of symbolizing the crucial facts of their redemption.

Today, we not only want to see the *perpetuity*, the *pattern* and the *purpose* of the Passover, but also the *prophecy* of it. Look again at what Jesus told His disciples in our text.

Luke 22:15-16 “And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

Underscore that word *fulfilled*. In other words, that Passover was merely a type, a shadow, a prophecy in practice, if you please, that God was using to point forward to something else. It was not the permanent institution. I know that the word *forever* is used in the Old Testament concerning the Passover, as well as other things contained within the Mosaic Old Testament code. I realize that. But the word *forever* does not necessarily mean *eternal*. If you'll very carefully study and trace that word and its usage throughout the scripture, you'll see that it can be a very broad word. It doesn't necessarily mean

as long as time lasts or eternal. It can mean *as long as something is appointed or ordained to be done or observed.* It can mean *throughout a dispensation or era of time* and so forth. Here in our text, the word that Jesus used when He said “until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God,” that word *fulfilled* means *to make replete, to satisfy, to finish a period or task; to verify or coincide with a prediction* (Strong’s Greek Lexicon, 4137). W.E. Vines says that it means *to complete something* (Vine’s Expository, p.257). Interestingly, the same Greek word appears in **Acts 7:30**, where Stephen was preaching about the calling of Moses.

Acts 7:30 “And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.”

In other words, for something to be fulfilled, it means that its course is run and will therefore be no more. When Jesus said that the Passover would be fulfilled in the kingdom, He wasn’t saying that it would continue in the kingdom, rather what it was pointing forward to in the kingdom during the age of the Jewish covenant would then become a reality in Christ and His kingdom. So, to what did the Passover point forward? The death of Jesus, as we’ve already pointed out. The sacrifice of the lamb of God. The Passover’s purpose would now be fulfilled, and like the other shadows and types of the Old Testament, it would be removed. It would fade into history.

We read about and are very thankful for the Passover of the ancient Jews, as it was an instrumental part of God’s plan, purpose and revelation, but it has been fulfilled. The Passover allowed them to be freed from Egypt and their bondage, to become a nation and ultimately produce the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save Jews and Gentiles alike from their sins. We’re thankful for the ancient Passover, but observing the Passover today means nothing to a Christian living under the new covenant. It would serve no purpose to a Christian today.

In recent years, it seems to have become popular for many people who profess to be Christians to observe the Passover. There’s nothing wrong with eating a lamb, if that’s what you want to do. Maybe you’re curious as to what a lamb would have tasted like. There’s nothing wrong with that, but to observe it as a religious feast? Some say it’s merely a way of reliving the experience of the ancient Jews or perhaps other reasons are given. Friend, I don’t need to sacrifice a bull or a goat to understand or appreciate that limited, remedial system under the old law. I don’t need to put myself in the place of an Old Testament priest and re-enact animal sacrifice. I learn about the place in history of those sacrifices through reading the Old Testament scriptures, which are given for our learning (**Romans 15:4**).

You see, now, I rejoice in the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the unblemished and perfect sacrificial offering for sin. I don’t need to literally burn incense to understand the worship in the ancient Jewish temple, or to learn the lesson gleaned from the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10**). I’m glad that I don’t live under that law and under those ceremonies and requirements. Rather, I rejoice that we, as priests unto God, can offer our prayers and praise to the throne of God as a sweet-smelling savor through Jesus Christ.

In the same way, I don’t need to try to observe the Passover like the Jews of old in order to understand its significance in history. In fact, I don’t think it’s any more appropriate for Christians to do that than it is to go back and try to observe any of the other days, feasts, festivals or ceremonies of the old covenant. The apostle Paul sternly rebuked the mixing of Jewish law with the gospel throughout the book of **Galatians**.

Galatians 4:10-11 “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”

Paul was talking about the feasts, festivals and so on of that former dispensation, and I would echo his words as well. We leave all of that behind because we now enjoy the reality in Christ. I am thankful today that Christ Jesus is MY Passover. I don't observe a feast once a year looking FORWARD to Him one day coming and dying for my sins. I come together with Christians in the fulfillment of the Passover meal every Lord's Day to look BACK upon the death of Jesus, which has already taken place, you see.

I Corinthians 5:7 “..For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”

Christians should be satisfied to observe that which Jesus now ordains in His kingdom instead of trying to go back and partake of that which was inferior and merely pointed forward to something that is now better than what they had. The Passover was *prophetic*, and now, that which it prophesied of, is here and with us. Those who are saved and faithful in Christ Jesus are privileged to gather with Him around His table in the local assembly of His church every first day of the week (**Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7**) to remember and rejoice in the benefits of His death upon the cross of Calvary.

Remember, the Passover pointed *forward* to the cross, the Lord's Supper points *backward* to the cross, and just as the symbols of the Passover had sacred significance to the ancient Jew who looked for a Messiah to come, so the sacred symbols of the Lord's Supper are each significant to every believer who scripturally and faithfully observes it each Lord's Day today.

Let's think about that in our remaining moments. The cross of Jesus Christ is, of course, the focal point of the Christian faith. The communion is all about the cross and what took place there.

I Corinthians 2:2 “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Understanding what happened at Calvary is not only the basis of salvation; it's also the basis for how we partake of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper pictures Christ's death, so to properly and rightly observe it, we need to understand what happened in His death. There are three things that took place when Jesus was crucified and died upon the cross:

1. His body was given as a sacrifice.
2. His blood was shed for sin.
3. A new covenant was ratified.

All three of those things are pictured in the Lord's Supper if it is scripturally observed. Not two, but all three. Read carefully the parallel accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper (**Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22** and the revelation given to Paul by the Lord of that night in **I Corinthians 11**) and you'll see that Jesus correspondingly made three definitive statements when He instituted the supper:

1. What happened at Calvary? His body was sacrificed. Jesus, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Just as the paschal lamb was sacrificed, so the body of Jesus was made a sacrifice.

Luke 22:19 “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.”

The Greek word for *bread* is *artos* and it means *a loaf*. This loaf of unleavened bread that Jesus took and shared with them, He said it was His body. He is actually saying *My body is given as a sacrifice for you*. We memorialize or remember that when we each partake of that one, undivided loaf of unleavened bread. The symbolism is rich.

I Corinthians 10:16-17 “...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.”

You see, individual wafers and multiple loaves or something other than a loaf of unleavened bread shared by a congregation does not properly represent the body of Jesus. It corrupts the picture. That’s not how Jesus designed the memorial.

2. What happened at Calvary? His blood was shed in His death. That is so fundamental, so essential.

Hebrews 9:22 “...and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Hebrews 10:4 “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

Jesus’ blood washed away our sins.

3. By the shedding of His blood, He ratified the new covenant. He made effective or brought into force a new contract, a new agreement between God and man. The old covenant passed away and the new was made of force by the shedding of the blood of Jesus. Thus, you have the third definitive statement of Jesus:

Luke 22:20 “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

Three statements: *This bread is my body, this is my blood* (speaking of the fruit of the vine), and *this cup is the new testament in my blood*. Three statements, three objects, three inseparable things pictured. Jesus DIDN’T say *this cup is my blood of the new testament*. Nor did He say *this is the new testament in my blood*. He said *this cup is the new testament* (or new covenant) *in my blood* and He said *this is my blood of the new testament*. Why aren’t they just the same statement made in different ways? Because they’re not talking about the same things. The new testament is NOT the blood and the blood is NOT the new testament. One is an agreement between God and man; the other is the substance that made that agreement of force. Both are necessary.

There are many, many accounts in the life of Jesus and statements that the Lord made that we must be careful to compare and parallel the synoptic gospels in order to get the full picture. Each writer emphasized something that the other writers may not have even mentioned. We see that all throughout the miracles of Jesus and the teachings of Jesus. When we bring the gospel accounts together and parallel them, it’s only then that we get the complete picture. This is why we have three synoptic gospels plus the gospel of John canonized in our Bibles.

When you parallel all of the accounts of the Lord's Supper, it becomes clear that three sacred, essential and powerful things are portrayed in the design of the communion: His body, His blood and the new covenant. Just as there are three things represented, there were three things that the scriptures carefully mention that Jesus took and used as He instituted the Lord's Supper, to remind us of those three things involved in our redemption at Calvary: *this bread is my body, this cup is the new testament* and *this* (speaking of the fruit of the vine) *is my blood of the new testament*. He commanded them to share in His blood, shed for our sins to ratify the new covenant.

But men have changed the supper. Men have told us that the example that Jesus gave was not really an example, that it was incidental. But not when Jesus attached spiritual significance to the things He used when He established His own memorial to remember His death. One lamb per Jewish household, one undivided lamb to represent the Lord Jesus and His unbroken bones, His undivided body.

I Corinthians 10:16-17 "he 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."

It's a beautiful picture, if we observe the Lord's Supper according to the pattern that the Lord Jesus gave.

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