

Communion Gospel Implications, Pt 7: Christ our Passover (1 Cor. 5)

Please turn to 1 Cor 5 and like we've done for the last several communion messages, to prepare our heart for the Lord's Supper we're looking at how the gospel ordinance we celebrate today has should affect our lives. There are implications for how we live in light of the elements of the bread and the cup, as we remember the body and blood of Christ given for us, there's a sanctifying or purifying power of the cross the Lord intends at His table. 1 Corinthians calls us to proclaim His death till He comes (chap 11) and to know above all Christ and Him crucified (chap 2) and that He is risen and reigning (chap 15); and every chapter in the book connects to those gospel truths in some way to show how they practically apply. Last 3 communion Sundays we've done a message from each chapter (2, 3, 4). Other Sundays we're studying the upper room, Jn 13-16, where Jesus instituted communion

That was a Passover meal, Christ's last supper before the cross was really the last Passover that He turned into the first Lord's Supper. Paul explains more of the theology of Christ as our Passover and how we should then live in 5:7 *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.* ⁸ *Let us therefore celebrate the festival [feast], not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

For those of you that aren't familiar with unleavened bread, this is what the Jews were commanded by God to eat along with lamb when they celebrated the festival of Passover. It was made from a lump of dough without leaven or yeast, like a cracker. The week after Passover was a Feast of Unleavened Bread, this is what they would eat. To start the Passover feast a dad would take the unleavened bread, break it in half to distribute for the meal and the tradition was to wrap the other half in a cloth that is hidden to be found later (we'll come back to that later but start with the broader context of Passover)

The apostle Paul was trained under Gamaliel, a revered rabbi in Jerusalem (Acts 5:34). I wonder if he was there as 12-year-old Jesus was talking with Jerusalem rabbis after one Passover. Gamaliel wrote: 'Whoever does not explain three things in the Passover has not fulfilled the duty incumbent on him. These three things are: the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. *The Passover lamb* means that God passed over the blood-sprinkled place on the houses of our fathers in Egypt; *the unleavened bread* means that our fathers were delivered out of Egypt (in haste); and *the bitter herbs* mean that the Egyptians made bitter the lives of our fathers in Egypt'¹

The book by Friends of Israel *The Gospel and the Feasts of Israel* explains: 'Judaism and Christianity are as inseparable as seed and flower ... Nowhere can the organic relationship between the two be observed more clearly than in the Jewish Passover and the Last Supper...the rabbis say Messiah is most likely to come on the night of Passover ... Every time a Jewish person partakes of the Passover [even if just tradition or culture], he unconsciously bears witness to the Messiah. Every time a Christian partakes of the Lord's Supper, he remembers the One of whom the Passover lamb was a portrayal, the Messiah who died for him and by whose blood he is cleansed ...'²

Like we've done before in the last few chapters we're not studying every verse, but we're studying some key passages that bring out implications of the gospel for our lives. Here in v. 7-8 Paul talks about Christ our Passover and implications for cleansed and pure lives. So to prepare for the Lord's Table, I want us to consider in v. 7 another table first, a Passover table that Christ as the Lamb of God transformed by His sacrifice for us on the cross after that meal. The Lord's Supper was instituted at His last seder. A festival for Jewish families was transformed to be a fellowship celebration for God's family of every nation. The church is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

1st point: Christ is called our Passover (v. 7)

2nd point: Christ is calling us to purity (v. 7-8, communion applications)

1st, Christ is called our Passover

Middle of v. 7: '*... For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*'

This Greek *pascha* in v. 7 can be translated *Passover lamb* or just *Passover*, some say '*paschal lamb*' (RSV). The word doesn't just mean the side dish of meat, some lamb on a plate, Passover means the whole Jewish festival, the whole feast. The context from the OT is rooted in Gen 22, Abraham, Isaac, and the promise God 'will provide a lamb.' A substitute was provided, the firstborn didn't die. Then in Ex 12 the descendants of Abraham again were provided a lamb as a substitute so firstborn sons wouldn't die in Egypt. 4 days before Israel's deliverance, each family took a lamb '*without blemish, a male*' (v. 5, NKJV f.n. says 'without blemish' can mean 'perfect'). It had to live among them a few days in Egypt, Passover day it was led to slaughter, and its blood was sprinkled on the lintel (crosspiece at top) and 2 sides of the door. Even the very motion of sprinkling blood can be seen as a motion like the shape of a cross.³ Ex 12 also says not one of the lamb's bones were to be broken (v. 46). Each house covered by the blood of the lamb was safe from the wrath of God that fell on Egypt, the death angel would 'pass over.'

Paul who was trained as a Jewish rabbi knew that story as well as any but it wasn't known to many rabbis that *Christ our Passover has been sacrificed*. Paul understood Christ was the Messiah the Jewish prophet Isaiah spoke of, the male child who would be mighty God (9:6), God with us (7:14), and He would offer Himself '*as a lamb to the slaughter*' to '*sprinkle many nations*' (53:7, 52:15). Paul understood the OT festivals were shadows of things to come and the substance or reality is found in Christ (Col 2:16-17). Rom. 3: '*redemption...is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood* [sacrifice to satisfy God's wrath, and the next verse says] *he had passed over former sins ...* [then he adds] *by his blood, how much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God*' (that's Rom 3:24-25, 5:9)

Peter also understood Christ is our Passover. Listen to how he starts 1 Peter '*to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood* [goes on to say you're redeemed] ... *with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*' (v. 2, 19 NASB). John understood this. His gospel said:

- '*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*' (1:29)
- Jn 19:36 says of the cross '*these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken."* [citing Ex 12]
- John wrote in Rev 5 of those in heaven who understand this and sing - not of OT lambs that redeemed the nation of Israel out of Egypt - they say to the Lamb: '*You were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every...nation...worthy is the Lamb who is slain*' (NKJV)

[in John's gospel He's the door as well so we shall not perish]

The gospels tell us Jesus asked Peter and John to prepare the Passover lamb for the last supper. That involved taking it to the temple to be sacrificed and making all the preparations. In NT times many lambs would be brought into the city of Jerusalem 4 days before Passover. On Palm Sunday, Jesus as the true Lamb of God came into Jerusalem 4 days before Passover and entered the very gate the lambs were brought through. He lived among the people 4 days. In that time, before the priests and leaders of Israel, Jesus proved He was perfect and without blemish, no defect, spot or sin. Because of our sin we deserve God's wrath but Christ our Passover lamb was sacrificed for us.

Jesus willingly was slain for us at Passover *as our Passover* in the very time in the afternoon of the final sacrifices in the temple and as He was sacrificed the veil in the temple was torn open from top to bottom. That showed God's acceptance of His Lamb for sin and accepting us to His presence. His blood applied to hearts by faith covers us from God's wrath. God sees the blood of Jesus over me so He can pass over me in judgment. *Behold the lamb of God*

Christ our Redeemer died on the cross, Died for the sinner, paid all his due;
 Sprinkle your soul with the blood of the Lamb, [God says] I will pass, will pass over you.
 Chiefest of sinners, Jesus will save; All He has promised, that He will do;
 Wash in the fountain opened for sin, And I will pass, will pass over you.
 Judgment is coming, all will be there, Each one receiving justly his due;
 Hide in the saving, sin-cleansing blood, And I will pass, will pass over you.
 O great compassion! O boundless love! O loving kindness, faithful and true!
 Find peace and shelter, under the blood, And I will pass, will pass over you.
 Refrain: When I see the blood, I will pass, I will pass over you.⁴

Christ is called our *passover* now in application Christ is calling us to purity
 5:7 *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

All of that rich symbolism of the Passover Lamb has real-life application in our daily real world. Christ is calling us to purity, we need this cleansing. It may be the Spirit's been convicting an area you need to change. Don't put it off. Because Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, because He gave up His life for us to give us a new life, how can we not give up our old life? If Christ shed His blood for our sin to cleanse us, how can we not seek to shed our sinful old ways and want to stay cleansed and living a new life in Him?

Heb 10: '*...by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience...*' (v. 19-22). In OT times it was homes that were sprinkled by the blood, in NT times our hearts must be sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, confessing sin is key to a true heart

When 1 Cor 5:7 says *cleanse out the old leaven*, what exactly is old leaven? Thankfully we don't have to guess, keep reading: *Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil* [so 'old leaven'=malice/evil], *but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth* [so 'unleavened bread'=sincere heart, the truth, opposite of malice and evil]. Paul's not saying NT Christians have to keep Jewish feasts physically, it's not about requiring *matzah* bread, it's about removing malice/sin spiritually.

We don't celebrate the feast like OT Law, sacrificing lambs on the temple mount (if you even try, the Muslims there would slaughter you). But even if we could, Christ is the Passover lamb already sacrificed for us. I don't need to do a physical Passover feast once a year, this is spiritually everyday: let's not celebrate Christ in old ways (old life) but in new lives of sincerity, truth.

The Jews cleansed yeast from their homes, this is cleansing evil from hearts but we can do a celebration with bread to remind us of this spiritual reality. Communion celebrates Jesus as our Passover with bread to symbolize this. Normally people eat fluffy bread with yeast/leaven, but Passover was a time to only eat flat bread, unleavened *matzah* cracker. Ex. 12 said of the original Passover back in Egypt:⁵ *this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses ...*

Paul as a Hebrew of Hebrews had grown up every year watching his Jewish mom do a spring-cleaning of their house to remove any leaven bread crumb before they celebrated God's ordinance. Here in v. 7 it says spiritually we're to do some house-cleansing as well: *cleanse out the old leaven ...* It's hard not to think of Jesus before the last Passover. The first thing He did was to enter the temple and to cleanse God's house of the leaven of the Pharisees. After cleansing out the old, He celebrated that ordinance of deliverance and gave the church a new permanent ordinance, a new memorial of deliverance

The very day the nation of Israel celebrated their OT redemption became the very day Christ our Passover redeemed His church of every nation! We celebrate that today not in a seder with a lamb but in a Supper of the Lord slain for us. The preparation before breaking bread: cleansed hearts, 1 Jn 1:9

In Ex 12 originally unleavened bread also symbolized Israel leaving in haste from their old life in Egypt, no time for cooking, it was urgent, they couldn't wait to leave their old life (12:33-39, Dt 16:3). Paul in v. 7 may have that in mind as he uses the words *old* and *new* to remind us the old life of sin has to be left behind as urgently as God's people left Egypt that first Passover. You are free, flee in haste, don't look back, leave all that old leaven behind, you are unleavened now, v. 7 says. *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened...*In other words, you really are new so live like it! You are cleansed in Christ, don't be re-infected by the old life

In the same way Passover reminded Jews of former slavery and redemption, Christ is our Passover, Paul says, He's redeemed us from slavery to sin. We really *are* freed, so we should live like it, not like our old life as sin's slaves. The Puritan Stephen Charnock wrote in *A Discourse on Christ our Passover* 'The OT delivers the types, the NT interprets them. The Old presents them like money in a bag, the New spreads them and discovers the value ...

The Israelites in the Old felt the weight of the ceremonies, believers in the New enjoy the riches of them...*Thankfully remember this Passover...* Is it not fit our praises should surpass those of the Jews for the old Passover?... *Let us leave the service of sin.* The Israelites after this Passover did no more work at the brick-kilns of Egypt; they ceased to be Pharaoh's slaves and began to be the Lord's freemen...[Christ our] Passover delivers men from a spiritual captivity, under the yoke of sin, and the irons of Satan, [redeems] them in the liberty of the children of God, whereby they become a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a free and peculiar people. This strikes off the shackles, works an escape from the pressures of spiritual enemies, changes a deplorable captivity into a glorious liberty, and reduces Satan...that all his strength and all his stratagems, cannot render him master of that soul that is once freed from his chains...the Egyptian strength was so scattered, that they were...never able to [bring the redeemed back] to their former chains'⁶

The Passover table had reminders in bitter herbs of the bitterness of slavery. That bad taste left in their mouth was to remind them of what God delivered from. The traditional salt water at the table reminded of tears in those years and the horse radish literally brought tears to their eyes to remember Israel's anguish in Egypt as slaves. Why would they want to go back to that and yet some of their forefathers did later want to go back to Egypt instead of their Promised Land. Paul's using that analogy to say don't look back to your old life of slavery and sin, you have a new identity in Christ, a new inheritance greater than Canaan. Remember how bitter sin tastes so Christ will be sweet

v. 8 says don't celebrate with old leaven, meaning malice and evil. If you're harboring resentment, ill will or any evil towards people, don't celebrate the Table till you deal with that. Leave the old behind. Don't let the past define you or drive your present, don't look back like grumbling Israelites did, look upward to Christ the Passover Lamb who redeemed you from the past and is able to help you look past sin, to pass over what's covered by Christ's blood. Don't resent who or what God may be using to help you cleanse old evil out of your heart, submit to His cleansing agents, repent of evil to God, others. I can't welcome you to celebrate the table today if you aren't pursuing that 1st

In v. 11 the unrepentant weren't to eat with the rest in this context: *But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler —not even to eat with such a one* [literal Grk is 'share the table with.' Some take it as 'not eat at the Lord's Table with']

People living in unrepentant serious sin like v. 11, were at the very least, not to share the Lord's Table with Christians if unrepentant over sin. I think 'eat with' includes more, though: 'to eat with' was Christian fellowship, to treat someone as a brother, as if all is well, welcoming as is instead of warning. 11:27 warns: *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.*²⁸ *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*²⁹ *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*³⁰ *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*³¹ *But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.*³² *But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

The context of the end of chapter 5 is church discipline, where sinners who stubbornly will not repent of serious sin after the process of Mt 18, they must be excluded from the communion/community to purge the evil influence. We need to take serious sin in our heart and seek God's cleansing from sin. An unworthy manner would be an unrepentant manner, undiscerning of the body, unwilling to deal with your sins against the body. If that's not you, if you're a believer but feel unworthy, come in the worthy Lamb who's slain!

Turn to chapter 10 for one more application. Notice what Paul explains in 1 Cor 10:17: *'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.'* The end of v. 16 makes clear Paul's talking about the breaking of bread in communion, a participation in the body of Christ (NKJV uses the word communion, *'the bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?'*). Others have 'sharing' – the point is we share a common union of a common origin, we commune in common union with Christ and the other parts of His body. One bread points to unity.

The Passover practice was the head of the family would take one large piece of unleavened bread, and from half of that loaf he would break it into small pieces from a common loaf, divided and shared with the others at the table. Jewish tradition was the rest of the bread was wrapped in cloth and hidden away out of sight for a time often buried under a pillow/cushion. Later a son or daughter would find it, and it was only then the Passover was complete. But first the head of the family would say a special thanksgiving to God and would break the unleavened bread and share it with the whole body of the family present. A church family sharing 1 bread reminds us of our unity.

Jewish *matzah* to this day has stripes from baking and the bread is pierced. It says in the Jewish scriptures in Isa 53 Messiah would be '*pierced for our transgression...and by His stripes we are healed...He was led as a lamb...*' Christ our Passover lamb is also our bread of life. In Cor 11:24 he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and said '*This is my body which is for you...*'

Jesus gave new meaning to the unleavened bread at that Passover meal that night: His body given for His church. And just like the Jewish tradition the body of Jesus would be wrapped in cloth and would be buried as chapter 15 says after His death. Jesus as the head of this family spiritually gave of His body, it was hidden away, buried out of sight for a time till later a daughter, Mary Magdalene found Him, then the Passover symbols were all complete.

From Moses to Christ old Covenant Jews celebrated it with bread and cup. ²⁵ *In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* ²⁶ *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* Let's pray then proclaim

Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away, Slain for us - and we remember
The promise made that all who come in faith Find forgiveness at the cross ...
The body of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Torn for you - eat and remember
The wounds that heal, the death that brings us life Paid the price to make us one ...
The blood that cleanses every stain of sin, Shed for you - drink and remember
He drained death's cup that all may enter in To receive the life of God ...
And so with thankfulness and faith we rise To respond, - and to remember
Our call to follow in the steps of Christ As His body here on earth.
As we share in His suffering We proclaim Christ will come again!
And we'll join in the feast of heaven Around the table of the King⁷

¹ Cited from Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, chapter 12.

² Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel and the Feasts of Israel*, 1954, repr. 2004, p. 11, 13, 18.

³ I got this from David Brickner of Jews for Jesus in a presentation on Messiah in Passover.

⁴ John G. Foote, "When I See the Blood."

⁵ v. 14-15 NASB.

⁶ Stephen Charnock, "A Discourse on Christ Our Passover," in *Christ Crucified* (Christian Focus, 1996), p. 71-79.

⁷ "Behold The Lamb (Communion Hymn)," Getty Music.