

Exodus 12:1-20; 1Cor. 5:7,8

The Message of Passover

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us – 1Cor. 5:7

Our sub-standard for doctrine, the WCF tells us in its chapter on the sacraments that: *There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.* In the next section we're further told that *The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard to the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New.*

This is another way of saying that the Old Testament sign of circumcision corresponds to the New Testament sign of baptism and the Old Testament feast of the Passover corresponds to the New Testament sacrament of communion. We are aware, of course, that not everyone readily sees any connection between circumcision and baptism and in our church and denomination seeing such a connection is not a requirement for membership.

When it comes to the Passover, however, it's not nearly as difficult to see the connection between Passover and the Lord's supper. It was while partaking of the Passover feast in the upper room with His disciples that Christ initiated the Lord's supper. It was during that feast that we read of Christ in Lk. 22:19 *how 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. 20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

We've read from 1Cor. 5 where we find Paul making reference to both the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread which was appended to the Passover when we find him saying in vv. 7,8 *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 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.*

Now the Passover account that we have recorded for us in Exodus 12 is very rich with spiritual analogies that can be drawn when you compare the events of that Passover evening to your own experience of salvation. It can certainly be said of you what was true of the Israelites in Egypt that you were a slave. The Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians. You were slaves to the devil and to the world and to the flesh. The Israelites were delivered from Egypt by a mighty hand and a stretched out arm of the Lord. And it's no less true of you that it took God's almighty power to bring about your salvation.

It took a powerful work on the part of Christ to atone for your sins. And it took a powerful work of the Holy Spirit upon your heart to bring you savingly to Christ. And just as the Israelites were to count that Passover to be the beginning of months so your salvation marked a new beginning for you when all things became new and old things passed away.

What I would like to focus on this morning, in keeping with these spiritual analogies, is how the Passover feast preaches the gospel to us and leads us to remember Christ.

How, then, does the Passover bring Christ to our Remembrance?

I. The Passover Preaches Christ to Us

Exod. 12:3 *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.*

So a lamb had to be chosen. But not just any lamb. As you read further into the narrative you discover that this lamb had to be spotless. *Your lamb shall be without blemish – v. 5.* It also had to be in the prime of its life. *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year (v. 5).* It's interesting to note that this lamb was to be chosen on the tenth day of the month and it was to be kept until the fourteenth day of the same month (v. 6). This 4 day period afforded the head of the household opportunity to carefully inspect the lamb to be sure that the lamb qualified to be a Passover lamb. Then on the evening of the 14th day of the month this Passover lamb had to be slain and it also had to be roast with fire.

We know, of course, that the Passover lamb points us to Christ. The very first time Christ is identified in His official capacity as the Messiah by John the Baptist, he directs his many followers to *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).* And the day following he identifies Christ the same way *Behold the Lamb of God.* So Christ is identified as to His mission. It is in this capacity as the sacrificial Passover Lamb that He would take away the sin of the world.

In the book of Revelation we also find Christ identified as a Lamb, having been slain. In fact that designation more than any other is assigned to Christ in that book. So we read the account the Apostle:

Rev. 5:6 *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.*

5:8 *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb...*

Worship in that same chapter of Revelation is given to the Lamb - *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb...*

It is the Lamb who takes the scroll and opens the seals; It is the wrath of this Lamb that is feared by the world; It is the blood of the Lamb that enables the saints to wash their robes so they're spotlessly white; And it's that same blood of the Lamb that enables the saints to overcome the accuser of the brethren. It is the song of the Lamb that is sung in heaven; And it is the marriage of the Lamb that is celebrated in the end. The book of life that contains the names of those that inherit life is referred to as the Lamb's book of life.

And so our task and our purpose around the Lord's table this morning is to remember Christ, the Lamb of God. And you're to remember that like that Passover lamb He was without blemish and without spot. His life was sinless – so was His death. Like that Passover lamb He was scrutinized by men and was declared even by the pagan ruler who interrogated Him that there was no fault in Him. And like that Passover lamb He was slain and in a manner of speaking roasted in the fire of God's wrath.

There's a sense in which beholding the Lamb of God should be your aim every time you open your Bible and every time you engage in worship. The advancement of your sanctification depends in large measure on you beholding Christ, the Lamb of God. So Paul writes in 2Co 3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord.* And did we not just review how the Lord in His glory is revealed as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth.

Let's behold the Lamb of God, then, this morning as we partake of these communion elements. Just as the Passover feast was to be perpetual through the ages for Israel, so is our remembrance of Christ, God's Lamb who has taken away the sin of the world to be perpetual until He returns.

So the Passover preaches Christ to us. But would you think with me next how:

II. The Application of the Blood Preaches Faith to Us

The instructions to the Israelites were very specific. They were to choose a lamb on the 10th day of the month; they were to keep it until the 14th day of the month. On the evening of that 14th day they were to slay the Passover lamb and then they were to apply the blood to the posts and the lintel of the door. In v. 22 we have the account of Moses giving these specific instructions about the application of the blood to the elders of Israel. *And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.*

This application of the blood to the lintel and the door posts served a very specific purpose. The last and greatest plague was to be unleashed upon Egypt that night. This was the 10th plague. Pharaoh had hardened his heart through all the other plagues and he would not let the Israelites go. So it came down to this final plague which was the most terrible of all the plagues for it involved the slaying of every first born throughout all Egypt. Look at the words of v. 12 *For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*

And in the very next verse the purpose of applying the blood is revealed. So in v. 13 we read *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.*

Now I said a moment ago that the Passover preaches faith to us. It preaches a very particular aspect of faith which you could call appropriation. Salvation, you see, has to be personally appropriated. It would not have done the Israelites any good to hear these instructions from Moses and then fail to appropriate the instructions by applying the blood to the posts and lintel of the door.

Had they heard Moses give these instructions and even believed that the instructions came from God Himself but not acted on those instructions, they would have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians. There had to be in each household the appropriating of those instructions through the application of the blood. It's the same for each one here this morning when it comes to salvation.

It won't do to hear the gospel and even believe the gospel. It won't do to give assent to the truth of the gospel as coming from God Himself unless there follows an appropriating of that gospel to your own soul. You need the blood of Christ to be personally applied to you. You need the bloodmark, so to speak, on your soul. And that blood mark must be applied personally by you.

I often cite a text from the book of Hebrews that I believe gives the clearest description of saving faith. It's found in Heb. 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* In this text you can see that there's a cognitive element to faith. It says that they saw the promises. They were aware of the promises that pertained to everlasting life. But there was more than just an awareness of the promises, or there was more than just a cognitive element to their faith. It says that they not only saw those promises afar off, but they believed the promises – they were persuaded of them, the text says. But even that comes short of true saving faith. It's not enough to see the promises and believe the promises – just like it wouldn't have been enough for the Israelites on that Passover night to hear the instructions of Moses and believe the instructions of Moses.

There must be a personal appropriation of what you see and believe. And so Heb. 11:13 goes on to say *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...* Here is personal appropriation. They embraced the promises. They made them their own. And they did so by calling upon God in faith to apply those promises to them.

I consider one of the greatest blessings of our time around the Lord's table to be taking advantage of the opportunity for personal appropriation anew and afresh each time we meet to remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. Here is your opportunity to appropriate to yourself the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Here is your opportunity to say to God again as you're partaking of these elements *I do believe, I will believe, that Jesus died for me, that on the cross He shed His blood, from sin to set me free.*

There's a stanza in another one of our hymns that is a favorite of many Free Presbyterians. It's Samuel Davies hymn "Great God of Wonders." And in the 3rd stanza of that hymn we find a tremendous line of appropriation when we sing:

In wonder lost, with trembling joy, We take the pardon of our God: Pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood.

This is what we do around the Lord's table when we partake of these elements. We take anew and afresh the pardon of our God. We pledge our faith in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ and we appropriate anew the blessings of salvation that have come to us through His broken body and shed blood.

Now before I leave this point of appropriation, I must share with you a point from this Passover narrative that I once heard Ian Paisley make when he preached from this portion of God's Word. He was making the point that the believer's assurance is found in the blood of Christ, our Passover lamb. And he drew a striking contrast between the mark of the blood on the doorposts of each Israelite's dwelling with the varying emotions that would have been felt by those within those dwellings.

Here is a dwelling, for example, where faith in God's word was strong. With great confidence that Passover lamb was slain, and the head of the house boldly dips the hyssop into the blood and with bold strokes he paints the posts and the lintel of the door with that blood. He and his family are safe because the blood has been applied.

But a few doors down from that dwelling where confidence in the Word of God through Moses is strong there can be found another dwelling. And in this dwelling there is great fear and trembling. Will our house be spared? Do we deserve to be spared? And it is with great fear and trepidation with a trembling hand the Passover lamb is slain. Perhaps the firstborn son holds that basin of blood and is so weakened with fright that he can hardly lift it. And perhaps with equally great fear and trembling hand the hyssop is dipped into that basin of blood and is very weakly applied to the door posts.

The point is that in both cases the inhabitants of those dwellings are safe because the blood has been applied. Salvation, you see, is on the basis of the blood. It is not on the basis of your degree of confidence. In the one instance that confidence was strong; in the other instance that confidence was weak; but in both cases the blood mark was applied and that's the important thing. And so does that hold true for you and for me this morning. The important thing is not your degree of confidence. Oh it's a great thing to have confidence but salvation is by the blood not by confidence. And so the important thing to focus on is the blood rather than the strength or quality of your faith.

Are you trusting in the atoning death of Christ this morning? That's the question to consider – not your worthiness, not your strength or weakness, but are you trusting in Christ? Your participation in this communion feast affords you the occasion to say yes to Christ – yes I'm trusting in your atoning death. *My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus name.*

So the Passover preaches Christ to us and the Passover preaches faith to us, especially that aspect of faith that appropriates the blessings of salvation. It remains for us to consider finally.

III. The Passover Preaches Consecrated Living to Us

The instructions for the Israelites were not only specific in the matter of slaying the Passover lamb and applying the blood to the door posts but those instructions were also specific with regard to how they were to eat that Passover lamb.

The entire lamb was to be roasted with fire and there was not to be anything left over. Whatever was left over was to be burned. And in v. 11 we read of the manner in which this feast was to be eaten: *And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.*

The Israelites, you see, were on their way out of Egypt. They were leaving the land of slavery. They were exiting the house of bondage. They were going forward in their walk with the Lord. They were departing in order to meet with the Lord and worship the Lord in the way the Lord directed. In a very real sense a nation would be born that night when the Israelites left Egypt forever.

And to commemorate the haste with which they departed out of Egypt there would follow the feast of unleavened bread. No leavened bread was to be eaten during those next 7 days as a way of remembering their departure from Egypt. The idea behind the unleavened bread was that there wasn't time to wait for the bread to be leavened. They were leaving and leaving quickly.

And so the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread preach to you and to me that this world is not our home. We're on our way to better country. We fall into the same category as those described in Heb. 11:14-16 *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

Doesn't it thrill your soul to contemplate the glorious truth that since you've been redeemed you are headed for something better than this sin cursed world? The promised land for us is a new heaven and new earth wherein will dwell righteousness. And upon our entrance into that new world to come, as a follower of the Lamb and a believer in Jesus Christ you will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God forever.

We're reminded of that better world to come even in the words of institution of the Lord's supper. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come* Paul writes in 1Cor. 11:26. So as you remember Christ around this table this morning. Let this table preach Christ to you; and let it preach faith or appropriation to you. And let this table and these elements remind you that you're to live in this world as

one who is exiting from this world and is headed to a better place. And with that better place in mind heed the exhortation of Paul in 1Cor. 5:7,8 *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 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.*