

(The Names of Jesus) 6. Christ our Passover

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. 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.” (1 Cor. 4: 7, 8.) The Jewish Passover is one of the most lasting memorials of God’s covenant with His ancient people. After three thousand years have passed away, after temple and tabernacle worship have ceased, after the scattering of Israel’s sons in another land, after the cessation of sacrifices and ceremonial worship in almost every other particular, after the treading down of Jerusalem for nearly twelve centuries, you can still find as every Nisan returns, every Hebrew household in the world gathering around their table at the evening hour of the Passover week, eating the flesh of the lamb and the unleavened cakes with bitter herbs, while the father of the household, with lighted candle, passes through the chambers and searches under every article of furniture to see if he can find a single particle of leaven, and then solemnly pronounces that all the leaven is cast out. They sit down together under the sprinkled blood and partake of the paschal supper. How vividly it all interprets the words of our text, “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.”

The Paschal Lamb

In the book of Exodus we find the story of the first Passover. It was the beginning of months to Israel, even as the acceptance of Christ as our Savior is to us the beginning of life’s record in its eternal form.

1. The first thing was the selecting of the lamb. It was chosen on the tenth day of the month, the time suggesting the fullness of the time when God sent forth His Son. The lamb was first separated and set apart for three and a half days under the observation of all the people, and known to be without blemish and without spot. Even so at His baptism on the banks of the Jordan the Lord Jesus Christ was set apart by the Holy Ghost for three years and a half to the observation of all men, before He was sacrificed for the sins of the world.

2. The lamb was unblemished. So Christ was perfectly harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, with no guilt of His own to expiate, and therefore wholly free to be an atonement for the world. His perfection was witnessed by all men. His blamelessness could be seen in all possible circumstances. His life was as open as the noontide blaze, and none could find fault with Him in anything that He ever said or did. Even in the judgment of His enemies it was the most perfect and beautiful life ever lived below the skies. Even if there would have been no historical Christ, the Christ of the Gospels is a faultless and

irreproachable picture, which infidelity gazes upon with astonishment and admiration.

3. The lamb was next slain by the congregation of Israel. And so Christ was sacrificed by the decision of the Jewish Sanhedrin and the act of the entire nation, and was thus in some sense the public and official oblation made by them for their sins. The words of Caiaphas just before his death had a peculiar significance, which he did not understand. "It is expedient," he said, "that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Thus Judaism, like the great High Priest, offered up its own Messiah as a sacrifice and an offering for the sins of the world; and as they gazed upon the quivering bosom, the failing breath, and the flowing blood of that gentle lamb, how vividly they must have realized the meaning of sin and the cost of salvation! Even so we still behold the dying agonies of the Lamb of God, and in the memorial of His death realize afresh that "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Mercy's streams in streams of blood, Plenteous grace our soul bedewing, Plead and claim our peace with God. What was the full significance of that death? It was the substitute for their death. The first-born of Egypt fell before the destroyer's stroke; but that death took the place of their own death, and they escaped. And so, for our life His life is the sacrifice, and with that blood over us our spiritual life is redeemed and our physical life is safe until His will shall call it home. No destroying angel can touch us, though he may hover near, as long as we are under the blood and that death is our substitute and sacrifice.

4. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled upon the door posts and lintel of every home. It is not enough that Christ should be sacrificed; He must also be appropriated by each for himself. It is very sweet to know that the sprinkling was not done by other hands, but each household sprinkled its own doors; and so can each of us apply to ourselves the precious blood of our Redeemer. It was freely shed for all, and each of us can take it as freely as we may. How precious to know that this blood is for us still! Take it, dear sinner, and you can cover yourself from this very moment so that no angel of destruction can touch your being; but you shall stand by the very throne of God sheltered from all harm in the precious blood of Christ. "You are come . . . to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." Have you applied it? Apply it now and ever walk under its sheltering, cleansing covering.

The Feast

Not only was there a sacrifice, but there was also a feast. Not only was the blood shed for the remission of our sins, but the life of our dear Lord was also given us for our life. They were to eat the flesh of the lamb as well as sprinkle its blood. It is not even necessary to say that this represents Christ's own very life given to us as the food and nourishment of our whole being. "I am the living bread . . . he that eats me, even he shall live by me." "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." They were to eat the whole lamb, with the head, the legs, and the pertinence thereof; and so we are to feed on the whole of Christ. We need His head for our thoughts. "We have the mind of Christ." We need His legs for our walk; and the pertinence thereof covers everything that pertains to our life, and so there is nothing but Christ covers, supplies, fills. They were to leave none of it until the morning, and so there is nothing in Jesus that we can afford to leave unappropriated. He wants to fill all our life, to satisfy all our being, and to lead each one of us into the very fullness of union with Him in every particular. Let us take our sacrificial feast. It is not merely food; it is a feast. God does not merely supply all our necessities; He gives us abundance, wine upon the lees, fatness full of marrow, overflowing and boundless grace and blessing. So let us keep this

sacred feast.

They were not to eat of it raw, but cooked with fire; and so the Holy Ghost must prepare Christ for us and make Him to be suitable nourishment. He only can; and He loves to minister Jesus to the hungry and thirsty heart, to take His fullness and feed it into us, until every part of our being is sweetly satisfied and strengthened by the living bread. And they were to eat this feast together. It was not a solitary meal. It is not possible for you or me to take Christ alone in all His fullness. It is with all saints that we enter into the height and depth and breadth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. The more narrow and isolated you are in your Christian life, the less full and rich it will be; and the larger your heart and the fuller your fellowship in Him, the more of Him will you enjoy. If their family was not big enough, they were to take in the stranger; and so God wants some of us to enlarge our circle of love, to unite our hearts with others in the full fellowship of holy love, fitly framed together to grow up into all the maturity of our Christian life.

There were some bitter herbs in this feast, but they only added zest to the sacred meal, even as our trials are turned into blessings and become the bitter sweet of life when truly sanctified by the Holy Ghost to a loving, obedient heart.

The Leaven

This represents the element of corruption, fermentation, impurity. Therefore we are to purge out the old leaven that we may be a new lump, because we are unleavened. The leaven represents all that which is earthly and sinful, and we may know the leaven by its effects. That which produces the ferment of earthly passion, agitation, and unrest, selfish and unholy desire, rebellion against God, disobedience and sin, is leaven. There are two leavens. There is the old leaven, the natural life which God wants us to lay down, and then be taken up in His pure and heavenly life. And then there is a worse leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness. All this must be purged out.

The purging is sometimes severe, for the evil is obstinate. As we have already said, the Jewish father searches the house with lighted candle to see if there is a crumb of leaven, and having done so, he solemnly pronounces the house to be clean. So with the Word of God, we are to pass through the chambers of our heart, and having found any evil thing, cast it out, lay it down at the feet of Christ and under the blood. And when we can find nothing for which our heart can condemn us, we are to rest, we are to pronounce the house clean, the lump unleavened, and hear the Master say to our peaceful heart, "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you."

God does not want us to be in continual unrest and self-reproof; but in quietness and confidence to trust Him to keep us pure and holy. The enemy will love to sit upon us in judgment and to have us to help him, but this is not promotive of holiness any more than the opening up of the grave and the upturning of the bones of the dead could be promotive of health. Let us walk in innocency of heart, believing that we please God and sweetly resting in His love. We cannot purge out the old leaven, but we can give it to Christ, and He will cleanse us by His own precious blood and Holy Spirit. And having yielded up to Him, we must believe that He does cleanse us, and walk in simple faith and self-forgetfulness, with holy vigilance, and yet with holy confidence in His leading and keeping grace and power.

The Bread

"The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Not only are we to be ourselves unleavened, but our daily bread must be unleavened. We cannot feed upon mixed food. The cause of weakness and suffering

in most cases is that we feed so much upon earthly diet and forbidden bread. Sincerity literally means singleness, and truth suggests the idea of God's Word, which is indeed our daily food. As we feed upon it unmixed with the exciting thoughts of man, we shall be fed and nourished in all godliness and sincerity, and we shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Journey

They were to eat their Passover in haste, with loins girded and shoes on their feet and staves in their hands. They were to go on their way further to their full inheritance; and so we go forth from the Passover to all the fullness of our Father's will and our future inheritance. Let our loins be girded for service. Let our feet be shod for our holy race. Let our hands hold the hand of promise. Let our vision be set firmly toward His coming and all His holy will. Thus covered with his blood and feeding upon His flesh, separated from all evil, and pressing on behind the pillar of cloud that leads our way, let us walk as strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, looking and hastening unto the coming of our Lord, and preparing for it by lives of holy service and consecration.

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