

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

Leviticus 23:1-44

Foreshadowing God's plan of the ages from the past eternity to the future eternity

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER

(Leviticus 23:5; Exodus 12:1-13; I Corinthians 5:7)

The feast of the Passover is the only one of the seven feasts of the Lord not described in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus; and the reason for this is that Israel had already been given full instructions regarding its observance before their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

Let us turn back to Exodus 12:1-13, and refresh our minds in regard to the story of the first Passover and the details of its observance from year to year.

The Israelites were in Egypt, slaves of Pharaoh, under the lash of the taskmaster. This bondage had lasted for four hundred bitter years, and Pharaoh was determined not to let God's people go. Moreover, Israel did not deserve deliverance. Had she not sinned in selling Joseph into Egypt, thus bringing upon the nation the righteous judgment of God? But God in grace delivered His people.

What a picture this is of our own state and the state of every sinner saved by grace!

In Egypt, as it were; that is, in the Christ-rejecting world; in bondage to Satan and sin, we deserve the righteous judgment of God. **“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”** (Romans 5:20). The Lord Jesus Christ delivered us from the enemy of our souls when He died on Calvary!

Nine plagues, terrible in their consequences, had not been enough to make the rebellious Pharaoh relent. Then God told Moses that He would send one last, great plague upon the land—the death of the firstborn. And here is where God's grace entered in: He provided a way of escape for His people who, by faith, would kill the paschal lamb and sprinkle the blood, even as He commanded.

In every detail of the ritual, we see the type marvelously fulfilled in the Lamb of Calvary.

Let us examine the record carefully.

1. “This Shall Be the Beginning of Months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exodus 12:2).

Thus God commanded His people to revise their calendar, and to observe the month of their deliverance from year to year as “**a memorial**” throughout their generations (Exodus 12:14).

The spiritual significance of this commandment of God is not hard to find. In I Corinthians 5:7 Paul tells us that “**Christ our passover is sacrificed for us**”; and again, in II Corinthians 5:17: “**If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation] : old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**”

God reckons a man's life and service only from the time he is born again.

Israel in Egyptian bondage was, as it were, “**dead in trespasses and sins**” (Ephesians 2:1). The blood of the paschal lamb saved them from the judgment of death. Their new relationship to the Lord was founded upon the sprinkled blood. Therefore, it was “**the beginning of months . . . the first month of the year.**”

When I first came to this country, I went to the Pacific Garden Mission in the heart of Chicago, where hundreds of derelicts and wrecks of humanity have found in Christ their Passover Lamb. When a grey-haired man stood and testified, saying, “I am twenty years old today,” I did not understand what he meant. Then when he went on to explain that the twentieth previous year had marked his second birthday, his spiritual birthday.

I remembered what God meant when He said to Israel in Egypt, “**This shall be the beginning of months.**”

My dear brother, have you had your spiritual birthday? You may have respectability, morality, even church membership, and yet not be “*a new creation in Christ Jesus.*” “**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**” (John 1:29). Let Him create in you a new heart. “**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him**” (John 3:36).

2. “The Lord Did Bring the Children of Israel out of the Land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:51).

It was a night of perfect freedom. From a slave-people, Israel became a nation of warriors. From the whip of the taskmaster, from bondage in Egypt; “**the Lord did bring the children of Israel**” into full and complete liberty.

Even so, Christ has come to preach “**freedom to the captives.**” “**Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin**” (John 5:35). But “**if the Son . . . shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed**” (John 5:36).

“**Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (Romans 6:22, 23).

In Pharaoh's household “**the wages of sin**” was death —the death of the firstborn and eternal separation from God; but in Israel, with her people sheltered behind the sprinkled blood, “**the gift of God**” was life—physical life to the firstborn and eternal life to all who put their trust in the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world.

My unsaved friend, Jesus is the Paschal Lamb; and He can set the captive free. He can deliver you from the power of Satan and from bondage to evil habits and secret sins. Then you will be able to sing, in the words of the hymn:

“Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come; Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee.”

“Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come; Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.”

3. “*Your Lamb Shall Be without Blemish, a male of the first year*” (*Exodus 12:5*).

The physical perfection of the paschal lamb was but a faint picture of the moral perfection of the Lamb of God!

Peter tells us in words not to be misunderstood: “**Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot**” (*I Peter 1:18, 19*).

“**Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year**,” the Lord said to Israel in Egypt. And redeemed Israel put her faith in the sinless Lamb of God who was to come and suffer and die, in the full strength and vigor of His manhood—the sinless Saviour.

Satan tempted our Lord, but our Lord Jesus Christ is holy; He could not sin!

“**In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted**” (*Hebrews 2:18*).

He is “**touched with the feeling of our infirmities**,” because He was “**in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin** (or apart from sin)” (*Hebrews 4:15*). He is “**holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens**” (*Hebrews 7:26*).

That is why He could be our Saviour; He was and is and ever shall be “**without blemish and without spot**.”

4. “*Ye Shall Keep It Up until the Fourteenth Day*” (*Exodus 12:6*).

“**In the tenth day of the month**” (*Exodus 12:3*) Israel was to take the lamb, keeping it up, under observation, for four days. Why? In order to test it, to prove it, to see if it was really “**without blemish.**”

Here again the type is very clear. Throughout His boyhood and early manhood and for three and one-half years of public ministry our Lord was closely, keenly, cruelly observed by wicked men who sought to find fault with Him. The Pharisees sent officers to take Him, but they did not take Him; and their only excuse was this: “**Never man spake like this man**” (*John 7:46*). Even Pilate was forced to make the declaration: “**I find no fault in him**” (*John 19:6*). He was the perfect Son of Man because He was also the eternal Son of God.

5. “*The Whole Assembly of the Congregation Shall Kill It,*” God said to Moses regarding the Passover lamb (*Exodus 12:6*).

And every sinner of all the ages, from the time of Adam, had a part in crucifying the Son of God.

Your sins and mine and the sins of the whole world sent Jesus to the cross. “**He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**” (*Isaiah 53:5, 6*).

That the paschal lamb was but a type of Christ in His death is seen in the fact that our Lord went to Calvary on the very day of the feast of the Passover.

Every one of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is careful to tell us this significant fact. Had you ever thought of that last Passover supper in the light of this “**memorial**” of the centuries, my friend? The Lord Jesus knew when He sat around that table with His disciples for “**the last supper**” that He was the true Passover Lamb!

In the light of this eternal truth how precious does the Lord's Supper become to the believer, instituted by Him on that night as a new memorial, by which to remember His death “**till he come**”! No longer do we observe the Old Testament ritualism; no longer do we kill the lamb and feed upon it; for the types and shadows were done away when Christ offered Himself “**once for all.**”

Have you ever thanked Him, my dear brother, for bearing your sins on Calvary's cross? He loves you, and He is waiting to save you; but He does not force Himself upon you.

Listen to His words of invitation: “**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me**” (*Revelation 3:20*).

6. “***When I See the Blood, I Will Pass Over You***” (*Exodus 12:13*).

These are remarkable words! The sinless life, the perfect example of the Lord Jesus could not save a lost world, any more than the lamb without blemish, unslain, could save the firstborn in Israel from the judgment of death in that fateful night.

The lamb had to be slain, and the blood applied. So also Christ had to die, and His precious blood must be applied to the sinful heart of him who would escape eternal condemnation. “**It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul**” (*Leviticus 17:11*).

“**Without shedding of blood is no remission**” (*Hebrews 9:22*). “**When I see the blood, I will pass over you.**” It would take pages and pages to quote the many passages from God's own Word which tell us that it is the blood of the Lord Jesus that atones for sin.

This is the message of the Gospel!

Will you note also where Israel was to sprinkle the shed blood of the innocent victim? It was to be applied “**on the two side posts and on the upper post of the houses**” (*Exodus 12:7*).

You see in this—the blood on the lintel and on the two side posts—the very sign of the cross, a foreshadowing of Calvary. Between the destroying angel and the Hebrew there stood the sprinkled blood in the form of a cross. It was not to be sprinkled on the threshold; for “**the blood of the covenant**,” the shed blood of the Son of God, of which the sprinkled blood of the passover lamb was but a type, is not to be “**trodden under foot**” (*Hebrews 10:29*).

That precious blood is sacred, and woe be to that man who scorns it or rejects it or is indifferent to it! Christ died for the sins of the whole world; but the man is eternally lost who goes out of this life refusing to let the Holy Spirit apply the shed blood of the Lamb of God to his sinful heart.

Once it is sprinkled there, God says to the redeemed soul: “**I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee**” (*Isaiah 44:22*).

My unsaved friend, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (*Isaiah 1:18*).

7. “***Thus Shall Ye Eat It . . . It Is the Lord's Passover***” (*Exodus 12:11*).

God gave to Israel some very definite instructions as to how they should feed upon the paschal lamb, as they stayed indoors from evening until midnight. So we, too, have been left in this dark world for a little while—for communion with Him whose blood was shed for us, even as we witness to His name. It is our privilege, as well as our responsibility, to feed upon Christ, the Bread of Life. But let us look further at the definite commands God gave as to how Israel was to feed upon the paschal lamb.

(a) “**They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire**” (Exodus 12:8).

What does it mean to “**eat the flesh**” of the Lamb? The Lord Jesus answered this question when He was on earth, and John has recorded His answer in the sixth chapter of the Gospel which bears his name. Turn to this record, and read every word of it carefully. There you will find that the unbelieving Jews raised the very question which we have just asked, when they “**strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?**” (John 6:52).

Christ had miraculously fed the five thousand on the previous day; and when the multitudes continued to follow Him, He answered them and said: “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you: for him hath the Father sealed**” (John 6:26, 27).

With these words the Lord Jesus began His great discourse on “**the bread of life.**” “**I am the bread of life,**” He said repeatedly; “**he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst**” (John 6:35).

Then it was that Christ went on to say: “**The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world . . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed . . . He that eateth of this bread shall live forever**” (John 6:51, 53-58).

Moreover, the Lord did not leave us in doubt as to what He meant by these words. When He “**knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**” (John 6:61-63).

To “**eat the flesh**” of the Lamb, my brother, is to receive His Word into your heart by the Holy Spirit day by day. And Israel feeding upon the paschal lamb on the night of the first Passover is just a picture of what countless thousands have done throughout the ages, as they have fed their souls upon “**the bread of life.**”

The Word of God is constantly compared to food.

- Job, under the fires of testing, said of it: “**I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food**” (Job 23:12).
- The Psalmist also wrote, saying: “**How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!**” (Psalm 119:103).
- The Lord Jesus rebuked Satan when He was being tempted with that familiar utterance: “**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**” (Matthew 4:4).

May I ask you, my friend: Have you eaten of the flesh of the Lamb today? Before you went to your breakfast, did you feed upon “**the bread of life**”? “**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**”

(b) “**Eat not of it raw, not sodden at all with water, but roast with fire,**” God said to Moses concerning the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:9).

Our Lord Jesus suffered the fires of judgment for our sins when He died on the cross. And we cannot feed upon Him, the Bread of Life, unless we accept Him as the only Saviour from sin.

There can be no carnal communion with Him, no mere historical appreciation of His beautiful life. We must “**eat the flesh . . . roast with fire.**”

If we are going to feed upon the Word of God, we must let it stand as it is!

We have no right to take out of it what we may not happen to like—the doctrine of the total depravity of the human soul, of an eternal hell for the wicked, of the need of the cross for the sinner who would escape the judgment he deserves. We have no right or authority to rob the eternal Son of God of His deity by relegating the teaching regarding His virgin birth and His bodily resurrection to the stock of myths and fables. Either He is eternal God and only Saviour, or we have no “**bread of life,**” upon which to feed our hungry souls!

(c) “**With bitter herbs they shall eat it**” (Exodus 12:8).

We shall see the significance of the eating of “**unleavened bread**,” which followed on the day after the Passover, when we come to the study of “**the feast of unleavened bread**.” But here let us note that the lamb, “**roast with fire,**” was to be eaten “**with bitter herbs.**”

This reminds us not only of the bitter “**cup**” which our Lord drank when He became our Sin-Bearer; but it also takes our thoughts back to His own words: “**Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me**” (Mark 8:34).

When you take Christ as your Saviour, my friend, so far as the world is concerned, it will mean eating the bitter herbs; that is, if your testimony is out-and-out for Him. You may be ridiculed or even persecuted, as Paul was, and as were all the martyrs of Jesus. Even those you love best may make your way hard because of your testimony for Christ.

“**In the world ye shall have tribulation,**” the Saviour said; “**but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world**” (John 16:33).

And there will be no bitter herbs in heaven! Again our Lord's own words encourage our hearts: “**And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life**” (Matthew 19:29).

(d) “**And they shall eat the flesh in that night . . . his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire**” (Exodus 12:8-10).

Now “**the head**” represents the thoughts; “**the legs**” represent the walk; while “**the purtenance thereof**” speaks of the heart. We must know what our Lord taught, and act upon it in our conduct, even as we feed our souls upon that which filled His heart—the love and compassion and infinite tenderness of the Son of God.

We can know what He taught only as we study His Word. Then only can we “**walk in the light, as he is in the light**” (I John 1:7). And, in this daily fellowship with Him, we shall know in ever-increasing measure of the meaning of the prayer:

“Give me a heart like Thine;
By Thy wonderful power,
By Thy grace ev'ry hour,
Give me a heart like Thine!”

If we want to tell the derelicts and the wrecks of humanity something of the love of God, my friend, we must feed upon the heart of the Lamb.

- He knew what it was to weep over His beloved city.
- He had sympathy for those who had missed the way.
- He was moved with compassion as He saw men and women rushing on to the judgment bar of God, unsaved and undone.

His love for sinners brought Him all the way from glory to die the most shameful of deaths. Do you know what it is to feed upon the heart of the Lamb, my Christian friend? If you do, then He can use you as a winner of souls.

None of the paschal lamb was to be left until the morning; all that remained was to be burned with fire. And all that our Lord is in His person, all His redemptive work for us—these things are precious and sacred. They are not to be lightly esteemed or discarded or despised.

(e) “**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**” (Exodus 12:11).

Four distinct commands given in this statement tell us that God is not pleased with idle, careless Christians. Israel was to eat the lamb:

- (1) with girded loins;
- (2) with their shoes on their feet;
- (3) with staff in hand;
- (4) in haste.

God knew that He would deliver them from Egyptian bondage that night, and that a long pilgrimage was before them. He knew that Egypt was doomed, and that His people must be up and away. Therefore, He told them to be ready for the march.

What a lesson this should be to every one of us today! Paul tells us to put on the whole armour of God, having our “**loins girt about with truth**” (Ephesians 6:14). And Peter adds: “**Gird up the loins of your mind**” (I Peter 1:13). With a belt of Scripture around the desires that emanate from the mind and heart, we shall then set our affections “**on things above**” (Colossians 3:1, 2).

We are living in a day when looseness of character, like a flabby garment, is seen, even in many who profess the name of Christ. Let us gird up the loins of our minds with the truth of God's eternal Word.

Again, God told Israel to be ready for the march, with shoes on their feet and with staff in hand.

Their whole attitude showed that they were no longer at home in Egypt. They were to be ready for the pilgrim journey. Likewise, we are told to have our “**feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace**” (Ephesians 6:15), to be ready to speak for Christ, ready to go for Him, or ready to stay for Him.

Paul said, “**I am ready.**” Are we? Are we ready to serve Him in His own appointed place, even if that means on a bed of suffering—as an intercessor for the lost and as a living witness to His sustaining grace? Are we ready for His coming? The Christ-rejecting world is doomed to swift and certain judgment. We must feed upon the Lamb “**in haste,**” to snatch the souls of men as brands from the burning.

Our walk here—from the evening till the morning—is that of a pilgrim; for “**here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come**” (Hebrews 13:14).

Thank God! There will be a morning! And in the meantime, we are sheltered behind the blood of the “**Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**”! We “**shall not come into judgment.**”

No wonder Israel was told to remember the feast of the Passover every year, as “**a memorial**” throughout their generations. No matter how profound we may become in spiritual things, no matter how much we may fathom the depths of the love of God, we can never forget Calvary!

And throughout the endless ages we shall remember “**Christ our passover, who is sacrificed for us,**” because we “*shall know Him by the print of the nails in His hands.*”

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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