The Memorial of Our Lord's Death

IN HIS FIRST letter to the church of God at Corinth, chapter five, verses seven and eight, the Apostle Paul writes, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven [of sin and corruption], neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." And in the tenth chapter, verses sixteen and seventeen, he raises the question, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" Then he goes on to say, "We being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

In the eleventh chapter, verses twenty-three to twenty-six, he further states, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. . . . For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

As we are met together to celebrate this most important and profoundly meaningful event in the earthly experience of our Lord—namely, the memorial of his death—let us bear in mind the four great particulars connected therewith.

FOUR PARTICULARS

1) The death of our Lord Jesus as the Passover Lamb that "taketh away the sin of the world."—John 1:29

2) Our relationship, or participation, with him in the sufferings of Christ, being broken with him and sharing his cup.

3) We celebrate incidentally and prospectively the great deliverance which soon will follow this passing over of the present nighttime of sin and death. The deliverance will affect, first of all, those passed over, the "church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23), comprising the elect overcomers, the "little flock" (Luke 12:32) of 144,000 and the "great multitude" (Rev. 7:9); these two, the elect overcomers and the 'great multitude' being the antitypes of the priesthood and the Levitical host, dedicated to the service of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. The deliverance of the firstborn ones is, first, from the condemnation of sin and death resting upon humanity so that they can walk in newness of life up to the glorious spiritual estate in Christ's kingdom, ultimately to be established in all the earth.

4) We also incidentally commemorate the great "feast of fat things" foretold in Isaiah 25:6, which will follow the passing over of the church, when

the passed-over ones shall be associated with their Lord in his heavenly kingdom as the antitypical Prophet, Priest, Judge, Mediator, and King over all the earth; to bless and uplift humanity through the same precious blood which he now permits the passed-over ones to participate in sacrificially, after the imputation of its merit has made them worthy of acceptance in the Beloved.

These four different points should be kept in mind separate and distinct from each other, if we would have the greatest blessing from this Memorial. The apostle says, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast.' This signifies not only that the Passover is of vital interest and particular importance to us as his followers, but also, that this time of the year is the appropriate time for commemorating the death and resurrection of our Lord. The typical unblemished lamb, separated and selected on the tenth day of Nisan, was in the first month of their sacred year. Hence it was on the fateful fourteenth of Nisan, A.D. 33, that Jesus died the just for the unjust, becoming what John the Baptist heralded as the Lamb of God that 'taketh away the sin of the world.' Those happenings of that eventful night, and following day in Egypt, vividly disclose the purpose of God with reference to his people.

THE ANTITYPICAL LAMB

Our Jewish friends, in celebrating the Feast of the Passover, the seven-day feast of unleavened bread beginning on the fifteenth day of Nisan, do so in commemoration of that great deliverance of Israel of old from their Egyptian taskmasters, at

the hand of God through Moses. We celebrate, or commemorate, the great gift of God, our Lord Jesus as the antitypical Lamb which, when properly recognized, shall be to all people as announced by the angel at the time of the Savior's birth in Bethlehem. (Luke 2:10) The result of his death and resurrection being, first, our deliverance from "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) under the administration of the great taskmaster, Satan, and from the condemnation of sin and death. Finally, when all such as have been called of God in this Gospel Age have made their calling and election sure by faithfully following in Christ's steps, the complete deliverance and restoration of favor to natural Israel will take place, and also blessings and favor to all the families of the earth, as originally promised to Abraham.—Gen. 22:18

That remarkable demonstration of the power of God to deliver his ancient people Israel from Egyptian bondage well illustrates, or pictures, the deliverance of all who will become his people down to the end of the Millennium. However, let us always bear in mind that before deliverance could come, Israel was required to carry out the instructions of God with respect to the Passover, the first feature of their miraculous deliverance. Had they failed to comply with the instructions given them by Moses, there would have been no deliverance for Israel.

FAITH IN JESUS' BLOOD

During that fateful night in Goshen, Egypt, their firstborn, the heirs, were in danger of death, and had not the blood of the unblemished, male lamb appeared on the doorposts and lintels of their homes,

their firstborn would have perished, as did all the firstborn of the Egyptians. Hence, it was the firstborn of Israel who foreshadowed the firstborn, the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ of this Gospel Age as mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:17, which indicates that only these are on trial for life or death. However, instead of the blood of the paschal lamb being sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of our homes, as the Jews were required to do, the apostle in Hebrews 10:22 calls our attention to the fact that our hearts are sprinkled from a consciousness of evil. We are freed from the condemnation of sin and death resting upon all men through original sin, Adamic sin, by virtue of our faith in his shed blood. The apostle makes this very clear to us in Romans 5:1,2, where he writes, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace [favor] wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

In Romans 8:1, the Apostle Paul writes, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Then, after the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses in Goshen, Egypt—for the preservation of the lives of their firstborn—the lamb was to be roasted and eaten in haste that night, with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The Israelites were to have their loins girt about, their shoes on their feet, their staffs in hand; ready for their deliverance as a people the next morning. Nothing of that lamb was to be left over, but entirely consumed—the

parts not eaten destroyed—illustrating that with the passing over of the firstborn and the partaking of the lamb, the atoning work of this Gospel Age would be completed. The reconciliation would have been effected for all the household of faith. The fact that they were to be girded and ready for their journey would seem to typify that we, as the Lord's followers, are pilgrims and strangers in the earth; that here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. The apostle tells us in Hebrews 13:14, and in Philippians 3:20, that our citizenship is in heaven from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The eating of the paschal lamb, and the unleavened bread with the bitter herbs, well illustrates our acceptance and appropriation of the merit of the sacrifice of our Lord's perfect, unblemished human life, represented by the unblemished lamb; and the unleavened bread also gives us the strength and fortitude to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," as indicated by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:14. The bitter herbs are emblematic of those trying experiences designed to make us more appreciative of the value of his perfection, and the realization that he of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness (justification), sanctification and redemption (deliverance). If there is anything wherein we have reason to glory or to boast, it is in him alone, as the apostle writes in I Corinthians 1:30,31.

THE PASSING OVER

The general picture related to the antitype of the passing over from death to life of the firstborn,

and the subsequent release of all mankind from sin and death. The enemies of God and mankind being destroyed in the second death is pictured by the overwhelming of Pharaoh and his horsemen in the Red Sea. Each household represented the household of faith. Each lamb represented the Lamb of God, and the firstborn represented the church of the firstborn written, or enrolled, in heaven. Later, the tribe of Levi, with its priesthood chosen from it, was substituted for the firstborn of Israel. The illustration carries beyond the baptism of Israel into Moses in the cloud and the sea (I Cor. 10:2), into the wilderness of Sinai, also called Zin, and their battlings beyond the Jordan. The antitype of this can be seen in our baptism into Christ—into his voluntary, sacrificial death—and our being raised to walk in newness of life as New Creatures, with the battlings within and without, until the church militant shall become the church triumphant in the glory beyond.

THE PASSOVER SUPPER

As a Jew under the Law Covenant, it was incumbent upon our Lord to celebrate the Passover at the proper time, and this he did with his disciples in that upper room in Jerusalem. Then, after the supper was over, he took the unleavened bread left over from the Passover, as the account shows, and after giving thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying that it represented his body broken for them, his disciples, and for all mankind. Then he took the cup containing the fruit of the vine and, after giving thanks, gave it to them to partake of, declaring that it represented his blood of the

New Covenant, shed for the remission of sins. The beloved Apostle John, writing in I John 2:2, indicates how all-inclusive and all-comprehensive his blood of the New Covenant for the remission of Adamic sin is when he states that "he is the propitiation [or satisfaction] for our sins [the church's] and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." How comprehensive is this statement of the extent of the merit of Jesus' sacrifice.

THE SLAIN LAMB

The broken, unleavened bread, and the cup containing the fruit of the vine that he gave his disciples, was something new and different from the Passover supper in which they had already participated. He said this was in remembrance of him, of his sacrificial death. With them, thereafter, it was to supplant the Jewish Passover, but not as another and higher type of the Passover. That type of the slain lamb was then in process of being fulfilled in the death of Jesus, the antitypical Lamb of God. It was and still is a Memorial, a remembrancer of the antitype—the slain Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. As the Apostle Paul says, "as often," year after year, at this time, as this Memorial is celebrated, "it shows forth the Lord's death till he come"—that is, until his kingdom is established in power and great glory and we, as his faithful followers, share it with him in the glory beyond the veil.

As quoted at the outset from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the church of God at Corinth, the question he raised was: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion, [common union, partnership] of the blood of Christ?' Does this not

show that we all have not only a common interest in this arrangement, but all of us are related to each other in it as a whole? He further raises the question, 'The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' Then he goes on to relate, 'We being many are one bread [or loaf] and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' That makes us joint-sharers with him in our voluntary sacrifice and suffering for righteousness' sake. Also, all of us together with our living Head, Christ Jesus, go to make the whole, or complete, sacrifice because of sin. Therefore, we can sing with heart and voice, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love," and we might add the words, "and service."

While the cup pictures suffering and ultimate death as his disciples, it also represents a cup of salvation, a cup of blessing, as the Apostle Paul calls it. We shall be with our Lord, see him as he is—the glorified, Divine spiritual being—and share his glorious reign as priests and kings a thousand years, for the uplift of humanity to the perfection of human life lost in father Adam.—II Pet. 3:13

A SPECIAL BLESSING

What a glorious privilege is ours of thus being associated with our Lord Jesus Christ in suffering with him as his devoted followers, in bearing our crosses that we may also be glorified together with him. May we always give consideration to his words of spirit and life, and endeavor to fashion ourselves into his likeness, recognizing and realizing that to do so will assure us of a place in his kingdom to come in all its glory.

Let us show our gratitude, our appreciation of this opportunity of entering into the joys of our Lord by doing as he so earnestly requested, remembering his costly sacrifice for us and all mankind. Let us conscientiously and understandingly partake of these emblems—the broken, unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine—with their depth of meaning to us, and, by so doing, indicate our complete devotion and rededication to the will of God as it has been disclosed to us. Our Lord Jesus said, "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29) Also, his words are recorded by the beloved Apostle John, "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 my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."—John 6:53-58

TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP

This was unusual language, and difficult for the Jews to understand. Even those who were his disciples seemingly could not fully comprehend the meaning of his words. The account states, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear

[understand] it?" (John 6:60) But he turned to his immediate disciples, those whom he had specially chosen, and reassured them of its meaning. However, the account shows that many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. But, to us who have been with Jesus, and have learned of him through his words of Truth and life, we, like Peter at that time, realize that he alone has the words of eternal life. He alone, as the Prophet indicated in Isaiah 63:3, has "trodden the winepress alone." He experienced the ignominy and shame attached to death upon the cross, taking upon himself the iniquities of us all. Surely we can realize what he did for us, and all men, in laying down his perfect human life, that we and all mankind might have life with abundance in his great day of salvation. There can be no eternal life apart from him, and that by accepting the terms of discipleship and fulfilling them, we are imbibing of the devoted, consecrated life of Jesus, and are begotten by, and anointed with, the same Holy Spirit of God. That is exactly what these emblems of the broken, unleavened bread and the cup containing the fruit of the vine mean to us—an intellectual appreciation of, and a heart reliance upon, the exceeding great and precious promises of God to us-ward who believe.

KEEPING THE FEAST

'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast.' Let us not partake of this sacred and meaningful feast unworthily. Let us rid our hearts, our desires, of anything and everything that might interfere with our communion and fellowship with our Lord, and with one another, on

this both solemn and joyous occasion, and also during the days to follow.

May we all look forward with renewed confidence, faith, and hope to that time when we shall be forever with our blessed Lord and all the saints, in that glorious assemblage to which we are rapidly approaching beyond this veil of tears and heartaches!

May God's rich blessing attend us as we partake of this blessed feast and may it continue ever to be a stimulus and encouragement to us to press on until we shall have gained our great objective—the crown of life, the Divine nature. ■