

## *COMMUNION - OUR PASSOVER FEAST*

### *INTRODUCTION*

#### A. Context

1. Jesus' last Passover with His disciples, Matthew 26:17-25
2. The Passover combined two observances that were originally separate.
  - a. Passover, night celebrated in memory of death angel's passing over the Hebrew households in Egypt.
  - b. The Feast of Unleavened Bread which commemorated the first 7 days of the Exodus itself.
  - c. Leviticus 23:5-6, In the fourteenth [day] of the first month at even [is] the LORD'S passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month [is] the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread
3. Alfred Edersheim noted, "With a sacrament did Jesus begin His ministry: it was that of separation and consecration in Baptism. With a second Sacrament did He close His ministry: it was that of gathering together and fellowship in the Lord's Supper."

#### B. The Passover

1. Notes
  - a. Symbolism
    - 1) The blood of the animal symbolized the cleansing of sins.
    - 2) Bitter herbs represented the bitterness of bondage in Egypt.
    - 3) Unleavened bread was a symbol of purity.
  - b. It is celebrated on 14 Nisan (March-April)
  - c. Haggadah, a guidebook explaining the order and meaning of the Passover seder (meal).
  - d. According to the Talmud, a commentary on the laws of Moses by rabbis, wine was mixed one part water to three of the wine.
2. The meal - Pesach (pay-shock')
  - a. The four cups of wine symbolize the four-fold promise of redemption in Exodus 6:6-7.
  - b. Order of service
    - 1) The First Cup - Cup of Sanctification
      - a) I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians
      - b) Lighting of candles and ritual washings.
      - c) Instruction
        - 1] Four Questions
        - 2] Narrative
        - 3] Reading of Psalms 113-114 (Hallel)
    - 2) The Second Cup - Cup of Praise
      - a) I will rid you out of their bondage
      - b) Three symbols of Pesah
        - 1] Shankbone, represents the Passover lamb which denoted that God passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt.
        - 2] Massah, not sufficient time for the dough of our ancestors to leaven before redemption.
        - 3] Maror, bitter herbs, reminder of cruel bondage in Egypt.
      - c) Passover meal served
    - 3) The Third Cup - Cup of Redemption
      - a) I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.
      - b) The cup of wine reserved for Elijah is noted and requested that the door of the house be opened by one of the children, symbolizing that Elijah will be there one day to herald the Messiah.
      - c) Explanation of the Messianic significance of the Cup of Redemption.
    - 4) The Fourth Cup - Cup of Acceptance
      - a) And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD your God .
      - b) Reading of selected portions of the Hallel (Psalm 115-118).

## COMMUNION (THE LORD'S SUPPER)

### A. Institution of the Lord's Supper

1. The ordinance, Matthew 26:26-28, *While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*
  - a. Jesus instituted the first communion between the second and third cups of Passover
    - 1) The disciples were eating.
    - 2) He foretells the Cup of Redemption.
  - b. The elements
    - 1) Bread, mazzah, which represents the body of Jesus Christ.
    - 2) Wine which represents His blood which forgives sin and seals God's covenant.
      - a) A new testament
        - 1] Actually, a covenant, Exodus 24:8, And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled [it] on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.
        - 2] A new covenant, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.
        - 3] For further study, Hebrews 9.
      - b) Efficacy of Christ's sacrifice (poured out for many)
        - 1] Note the following verses which deal with the efficiency of Christ's sacrifice: Mt. 20:28; Mk 14:24; Hebrews 9:28; Romans 5:19 and 5:15, *But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*
        - 2] Yet, His sacrifice is sufficient for all, 1 John 2:2, And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world.
  - 3) Nature of the elements
    - a) Three views
      - 1] Transubstantiation: the bread and wine are changed into the real body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
      - 2] Consubstantiation: the body and blood of Christ coexist in and with the bread and wine, although they retain their nature as bread and wine.
      - 3] Memorial: the elements represent the body and blood of Christ once shed for our sins and that He is now at the right hand of the Father.
    - b) Divisiveness of the Lord's Supper

***Foxe's Christian Martyrs of the World***, Adam Wallace was tried in the Blackfriars' church in Edinburgh before a large panel of priests, bishops, archbishops, professors, and civil authorities. His accuser was John Lauder, parson of Marbottle, clad in a surplice and red hood. Wallace looked like a simple, poor man when he was brought in.

Lauder began: *Adam Wallace, you are accused of the following heresies. First, you have taught that the bread and wine on the altar are not the body and blood of Christ after consecration.*

Wallace turned to the panel of judges. *I never taught or said anything but what I found in this book, which is the Word of God. If I was wrong, I will accept your punishment, but everything I said is from this book. The he quoted Matthew 26:26-28 and Luke 22:19...What I said was that if the sacrament was truly administered and used as the Son of the living God instituted it, God was there.* Asked the same

question once more, Wallace used Scripture to show why he did not believe the host could possibly be the physical body and blood of Christ.

The accusers continued. *You openly taught that God is just bread, sown of corn, grown in the earth, and baked by me. Nothing more.*

*I worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons in one Godhead, who made and fashioned the heaven and earth and all in it. I don't know what God you worship, but if you show him to men, I'll be able to tell you what he is.*

Wallace remained firm in his testimony, was sentenced, and returned to prison. On the day of his death, his guards warned him not to speak to the crowd, but many people said, *God have mercy on you as he passed, to which he replied, And on you, too.* At the stake, he said to the crowd, *Don't be offended by my dying for the truth's sake. The disciple is not greater than his Master.* The guards threatened him for speaking, so Wallace looked up to heaven. *They will not let me speak.* The fire was lit, and Adam Wallace went faithfully to God.

2. Its future characteristic, Matthew 26:29, ***I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.***
    - a. The fourth cup of Passover (Cup of Acceptance) was postponed.
    - b. The Lord looked ahead to the final banquet in the Kingdom of God, Rev. 19:9.
    - c. It is a pledge to God's fulfillment of His redemptive work.
  3. Conclusion of the first Lord's Supper, Matthew 26:30, ***When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.***
    - a. Jesus and His disciples ended with a hymn.
    - b. It was undoubtedly from the Messianic sections of the Hallel, Ps. 115-118.
    - c. Psalm 118:22-26, *The stone [which] the builders refused is become the head [stone] of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it [is] marvellous in our eyes. This [is] the day [which] the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed [be] he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.*
- B. Relationship of the Lord's Supper to the Passover
1. The Lord's Supper is the fulfillment of the Passover
    - a. 1 Corinthians 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: 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.*
    - b. The identification of Jesus with the Christian Passover was accepted in the early church.
      - 1) Eusebius, Hist. V. 23:1, "The festival of the Savior's Pascha."
      - 2) Ante-Nicene Christian Library XXIV, 167, *And on the following day our Saviour suffered, He who was the Passover-propitiously sacrificed by the Jews.*
    - c. J. Vernon McGee, *Here we see the Lord instituting the Lord's Supper over the dying ashes of a fading feast, the Passover...The Passover will be reinstated in the Millennium. The Lord said that he would drink the fruit of the vine again in the kingdom. This means that apparently the Passover during that time will look back to His death on the cross. The Passover, which had looked forward for centuries to his coming, will also during the Millennium look back to His coming.*
  2. Purpose
    - a. Passover is a memorial to the physical redemption of God's people.
    - b. Lord's Supper is a memorial to the spiritual redemption of God's people.

C. Historical Perspective on Communion

1. Introduction
  - a. Discord - theologian Geoffrey Bromiley, "Perhaps one of the keenest reminders of our Christian fallibility is that of the Lord's Supper, instituted as a simple act promoting fellowship, has become the subject of complicated debate and blatant division.

- b. Elemental debate
  - 1) Transubstantiation - the bread and the wine are changed into the very body and blood of Christ.
  - 2) Consubstantiation - the bread and the wine become the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ while keeping the appearance of bread and wine.
  - 3) Memorial - the bread and wine signify Christ's redemptive work received by faith. It rejects the bodily presence of Christ in the elements.
  - 4) Reformed - in some way, there is a dynamic presence of Christ in the elements made effective in the believer as he partakes.
  - 5) Memorial with presence - it is primarily a memorial while acknowledging the presence of Christ in our midst.
  
- 2. Communion in the Early Church
  - a. First Century
    - 1) Most common designation was "Eucharist" from Greek word for praise or thanksgiving.
    - 2) Justin Martyr
      - a) *When we cease from our prayers, bread is presented and wine and water.*
      - b) *A distribution ...is made to each person, and to those who are not present they are sent by the deacons.*
  
  - b. Second Century
    - 1) *The Didache* - 100 A.D.
      - a) Only baptized believers participate.
      - b) *On the Lords' own day come together and break bread and give thanks.*
      - c) *Whoever is holy, let him come; whoever is not, let him repent.*
  
    - 2) Ireaneus
      - a) The partakers now engage in a spiritual service and enter by communion into the presence of God while the elements remain as they were.
      - b) The souls of believers are nourished because God superintends the service and by His grace feeds and blesses His own.
  
  - c. Third Century
    - 1) Origen, Eucharist is a *bloodless sacrifice*.
    - 2) Augustine, *What is seen is the bread and the cup which the eyes renounce; but what faith demands is that the bread is the body of Christ and the cup is his blood...What is seen has bodily appearance, what is understood has a spiritual fruit.*
  
  - d) 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> Century
    - 1) The Roman Catholic Church declared transubstantiation as dogma in 1215.
    - 2) John Wycliffe
      - a) He protested against superstition and idolatry he saw associated with the Mass and the importance given to the priest in *making* Christ's body.
      - b) He held to the *receptionist* view - participation is for believers.
      - c) He was committed to *remanence* - the bread and wine remain unchanged.
      - (a) *Nobody on earth is able to see Christ in the consecrated Host with the bodily eye, but by faith.*
  
  - e) 16<sup>th</sup> Century
    - 1) Differences in communion led to the first major split in Reformation Protestantism.
    - 2) Two Camps
      - a) Luther
        - 1] He held to consubstantiation.
        - 2] The body and blood of Christ are really present, *Christ is in, with, and under the bread and wine.*
  
      - b) Zwingli
        - 1] *This is my body* means *This represents my body*.
        - 2] Communion is a sacred feast at which Christ's death is commemorated and contemplated in faith.

- f) 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - 1) Elements
    - a) Baptists used wine and bread for communion.
    - b) In times of short supply, others staples were used, such as beer, brandy, biscuits, and cake.
    - c) With the advent of the American temperance crusade, Baptists found a substitute in unfermented grape juice which was recently introduced.
  - 2) Distribution
    - a) The use of individual cups came as a result of the germ theory in the 1860's.
    - b) The concept of the minister as priest serving the sacraments to people changed to the concept of the priesthood of all believers with deacons serving individuals.

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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*A meditation on the Lord's Supper by Wayne Clymer, Your words were so simple, so direct, 'Do this.' But Lord, it has not been simple. We contend with each other over who may serve; not who may serve as a servant, but who may serve as a privileged one. And we differ as to who may be admitted to the banquet. Shall the children you blessed by invited, or is your table for adults only? By what creed, if any, shall admission be granted? By whose confirmation shall the invitation be issued? Who has authority over the table? How do you, Lord, become present at the table? Does the substance of the bread and wine actually change when the prayer to the Holy Spirit is offered, or at some other moment...Are we breaking the holy law if the cup is filled with something other than the 'unfermented' fruit of the vine....You said 'do it in remembrance of me'...Lord, we have celebrated your supper and have not entirely forgotten. It is just that our memory is selective, protective.*