May the Lord Jesus increase the work of His Spirit within you.

*Blessed be the Lord,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.
The Lord is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart exults,
And with my song I shall thank Him.*

 Psalm 28:6-7

How good it is to know that the Lord God of the universe hears each and every one of our prayers. None of them is so short or so poor such that He would pay no attention. Not only does He hear them, but He delights in them. God loves to hear from His people.

The Lord is strong and He protects us. Sometimes it may seem as if He is not protecting us as the waves of the world buffet us and try to drown us. But that is our faith; that He is caring for us even when we don’t understand.

The trust of our heart is well placed when it is placed entirely in the Lord. It turns out that that is the only place worthy of our trust. That trust will not be broken and ultimately, that trust will even be rewarded beyond what we can think.

Be sure to thank Him.

In Christ’s love

John

 8-29-21

Exodus 12:1-13, 42-51

This begins a series on the Jewish feast days that were ordained by God. There are seven of them and they are listed in Leviticus chapter 23. There are some Jewish celebrations and feasts that were not ordained by God. There is nothing wrong with these celebrations, they are simply man-made and have no prophetic significance. Examples include Purim, which we learn about in the book of Esther; and Hannukah, which celebrates the successful rebellion led by the Maccabee’s against Seleucid rule during the intertestamental period.

The reason for studying the God ordained feasts is that Jesus is the fulfilment of all the Old Testament; this lets us know that it’s important to understand these feasts and how they point to Jesus. We need to see how Jesus fulfilled them. It’s easy to ignore the feast days because we, as Christians, are not required to celebrate them.

Paul makes an important statement in Colossians 2:16-17. *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ*.

First off, Christians are not under the Mosaic covenant; we are not held to the feast days or any other regulations regarding food or drink. Next, Paul tells us that all these things were a foreshadowing of events that would happen in the future in regards to the new covenant. Lastly, he tells us that *the substance belongs to Christ*: in other words, they are fulfilled in Jesus.

The first of the holy convocations ordained by God is the Passover. In Leviticus 23:5 it reads, “*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the Lord’s Passover.*” The Scripture we read from Exodus tells us the procedures for the Passover and that it was to be celebrated from then on.

The background of the first Passover is the nation of Israel being released from Egypt. Something to keep in mind here is that they were being released from slavery and God is the One who released them. God worked through Moses and Pharoah; but their redemption, their release from Egypt was all the work of God. In the process of releasing the Israelites, God demonstrated His power; brought judgement on Egypt who had enslaved His chosen people; and He brought judgement on the gods of Egypt. These gods were, of course, demons, and God demonstrated His power over them and their true inability to help their Egyptian worshipers.

This event was so important that God established it as the beginning of the year for the people of Israel. The time corresponds to our late March and early April; the spiring of the year when all things are made new. The name of the month was Abib. This was the Canaanite name for the month. This was later changed to Nisan which is the Babylonian name for the same month. This is the month that barley would ripen once they arrived in the Promised Land.

The Passover was to be a remembrance to Israel; a chance to explain to each new generation of their powerful God Yahweh, who had delivered them from the land of their captivity. It was also a chance for them to pause and remember what their wonderful God had done for them, while giving Him thanks for rescuing them from bondage. Over the course of time, they would begin to understand that there was some spiritual significance to God releasing them from bondage.

The immediate reason for the first Passover was to protect Israel from the tenth plague that God inflicted on Egypt. As we read through the account of the ten plagues, we see that some of them affected Israel and in some cases, Israel was spared the plague. But this was the only time that Israel was required to do something to avoid God’s judgement. Performing the list of things to do in the Passover that God told them through Moses was an act of faith. It truly doesn’t make sense to eat in the manner described or to smear blood on one’s house.

The tenth plague was, of course, the Lord going through the land of Egypt and slaying all the first-born. The Lord would “pass over” all the houses with the sacrificial blood on them and they were spared the judgement. Hence, it was called “the Lord’s Passover”. The Bible tells us that no Egyptian home was unaffected by this judgement.

We have here, with the lamb, a blood sacrifice. All of God’s atonement comes through a blood sacrifice. Also, notice that there are no priests or alters. The sacrifice is performed by the husband, the head of the household. This is explained later in 19:6 when God lets the people know that “*you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*”. It appears that the priests and Levites took over this duty later and is recorded in 2 Chronicles 30:17-18. In 2 Chronicles, King Hezekiah celebrated the Passover which had been long neglected. He invited people from all over the northern kingdom of Israel along with his people of Judah. Many of those who attended had not made themselves ceremonially clean, so Hezekiah had the Levites do the sacrifices and he prayed for the people who ate while unclean.

The Passover meal was a one-year-old lamb, one in the prime of life. It was to be roasted with fire, not cooked any other way. All of it was to be consumed at that meal. If any was left over, it was to be burned. In this way the holy flesh would not be exposed to defilement by either natural corruption or by being used as some sort of superstitious object. There were bitter herbs, to remind them of the 430 years of bitter slavery. And unleavened bread, because they did not have time to let the bread rise. They were dressed to move and ate in haste; they were leaving Egypt very soon and quickly.

The leaven of bread comes up again and again in the Bible. Many translations use the word “yeast”, but leaven is a little different. Each time a person made bread they would pinch off a little of the dough and set it aside. The next time they made bread, they would add the saved piece of dough to the mixture. Again, before baking, they would pinch off a little piece of dough for the next time. This little piece of dough is what’s called leaven. It contained yeast, but it contained other ingredients as well. This leaven is what the Israelites were commanded to leave out of their bread.

Leaven shows up many times as a representation of sin. Most, but not all, of the sacrifices in the Old Testament using bread required unleavened bread. Leaven is a good analogy for sin because they share some of the same properties. Leaven works its way through the whole mass of dough in the same way sin works its way through a person’s life, or through a church body. It takes just a pinch of leaven, and it only takes a little sin to cause big problems. As Paul says in Galatians 5:9, “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.*” Keep in mind that leaven itself is not evil, there is nothing wrong with it or with using it. It’s just that sometimes it’s used to symbolize sin.

God makes it plain that only those under the Abrahamic covenant were to participate in the Passover meal. This means men who were physically circumcised. This was primarily the Hebrew people; however, any foreigner who trusted the God of Israel and became circumcised could partake. They had become Israelites. This was a beginning of God’s promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him.

The feast of the Passover has continued throughout the existence of Israel. As we read the Bible, we see that there were times that it was neglected and not celebrated for long periods. These times were seasons of Israel turning away from God. There were also times where a righteous king would reinstitute the Passover as the nation returned to God.

As we’ve looked at the various aspects of the Passover, I’m sure that you’ve had some glimmers of events and ideas in the New Testament. This all has to do with God having a plan from the beginning and how He ties all these things together. It shows how God’s commands in the Old Testament prophesy what comes to pass in the New Testament.

The most important of these foreshadowing’s are the events that took place during the last Passover that Jesus celebrated during His life on earth. On this day He celebrated the Passover with His closest friends, instituted the Lord’s Supper, and was crucified. Jesus became the perfect Passover lamb.

Recall that the Jewish day started in the evening. So our Thursday evening would have been the beginning of their Friday. Jesus and the disciples ate the Passover meal during what we would consider Thursday evening. Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane around midnight. He was crucified during the day on Friday and was buried before evening came, which would have been the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. In Jewish reckoning, all this took place on Friday the 14th of Nisan; Passover.

Jesus ordained the Lord’s Supper, just as God had ordained the Passover. The Passover was begun while under the Abrahamic covenant and continued through the Mosaic covenant. The Lord’s supper is under the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. While the elements of the Lord’s Supper are symbolic of feeding on Christ, it is a means of receiving grace from God. Jesus is with us in a special way during the supper and we are truly nourished by the Holy Spirit. As the Corinthian church found out, the effects of the Lord’s Supper are very real. In chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians Paul reminded the church to examine themselves before partaking of the Lord’s Supper so as to avoid judgement. Some had not done this and he told them in verse 30: *For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep*. The Passover was to be eaten with unleavened bread; we are to confess before the Lord’s Supper to be free of the leaven of sin.

During the initiation of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus told the disciples to eat the bread, that it was His body. The Passover lamb was to be eaten; this again signifies that Jesus was now the perfect Passover lamb. Conformation of this comes in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “*For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed*.”

The Lord also states in Exodus 12:46 regarding the Passover lamb “*nor are you to break any bone of it*”. This shows up again as prophecy in Psalm 34:20, “*He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken*.” The importance of this is shown in Jesus’ crucifixion. The thieves had their legs broken to hasten their death, but because Jesus had already committed His spirit into the hands of the Father, His legs were not broken. This fulfillment of prophecy was pointed out by John in John 19:36. *For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.”*

The Passover lamb was to be roasted with fire. Fire is often a symbol of God’s wrath, which Jesus endured on the cross. The lamb was a year old, in the prime of life. Jesus was in His early thirties, in the prime of life. The Passover lamb was obtained by the family four days before the feast. Jesus came to this earth a short time before He was sacrificed for us. No-one who wasn’t under the Abrahamic covenant was to partake of the Passover. Anyone who receives the Lord’s Supper outside of the New Covenant has no benefits from the elements. Those who partake of the Lord’s Supper are to be circumcised in heart.

Of course, the biggest prophecy given by the Passover is redemption. Israel was under bondage, under slavery in Egypt. We are under bondage, under slavery to sin. The people of Israel were not strong enough on their own to free themselves; neither are we strong enough to free ourselves from sin and its effects. The work of bringing freedom is entirely the work of God. By faith the Israelites put blood on their houses to avoid the judgement of God. By faith, we who are Christian believe on Jesus Christ and His work on the cross to avoid the judgement of God. It was entirely the power of God that brought the Israelites out of bondage to Egypt. It is entirely the power of God that brings us out of bondage to sin.

It is interesting to consider that we used to be like Israel living in Egypt. We lived in a metaphorical Egypt in slavery. We have been brought out of Egypt. But in a very real sense, we are now like Lot, living in Sodom. Sodom was a place of depravity and immorality without fear of God, much like our world now. In 2 Peter 2:7-8 we are told that *“[God] rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds)*.” We live in this sinful society while we have the righteousness of Christ bestowed upon us. What we see here should torment our souls. But we know that we have been rescued by God and that although we live here, we are citizens of heaven.

God desired that His people be *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. That is still His desire and it will come to pass. Revelation 20 verse 6: *Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years*. The nation of Israel is still God’s chosen people, but we who have accepted Jesus are also His people, spiritual children of Abraham, the bride of Christ. This is what we have to look forward to, serving the awesome God in His very presence in the complete absence of sin.

Prayer

Lord God, as we read and study Your word, it becomes more and more obvious that You had a plan from before the beginning and that Your plan is coming to pass. This brings us comfort, because we can know that in spite of the evil that is so prevalent, nothing will happen that catches You off guard or that Your plan hasn’t already taken into account.

You are for us Lord, and not against us. Your promises have been proven true many times over. Again, we are comforted, knowing that You care for us and have promised good for us and You are all-powerful God who will accomplish His desires.

Lord, we simply ask for Your grace and strength, so that we may be pleasing to You. Guide us in Your ways so that we may accomplish those works You have for us. Use us for the building of Your Kingdom and to bring You glory.

In the precious name of Jesus, we pray

Amen