

Christ our passover sacrificed for us

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians chapter 5 at verse 7. 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 the old leaven neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

And it is especially those words at the end of verse 7 that I take as my text this morning. For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.

This morning we are bidden to come not only to hear the word of God preached but also to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Have you ever asked the question why is it that the communion takes the form that it does?

A meal of bread and wine celebrated by the whole church. Why does it not take some other form? Some other ritual?

[1 : 21] Some other ceremony? What is the significance of this meal? And the answer as I'm sure a moment's thought will tell you is quite simply that the supper is the Christian Passover.

Every year there is another meal celebrated in this world not by Christians but by Jews. To this day devout and not so devout Jewish families keep the Passover.

They have an elaborate celebration but at the heart of it is a meal around the table where the whole family gathers together and as a central part of that meal bread is broken and eaten and wine in a cup is passed round and drunk.

Our Lord's Supper is the way it is because it is linked with it is from the same family as the Jewish Passover.

And the best way I believe this morning for us to come meaningfully and hungrily to the Lord's table is to grasp what it means that the Lord's Supper is our Christian Passover.

[2 : 49] So the first lesson I would like you to learn or to underline in your Christian thinking is this that to appreciate the Lord's Supper we must know about the Passover.

The Lord's Supper is the continuation it is a deliberate continuation of the Jewish Passover. That's not an idea that I've invented in order to make a framework for a sermon.

It's perfectly plain from all that the New Testament tells us. For example Luke's account the Passover as we read it there in chapter 22 makes it abundantly clear that this was a Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples.

It was on the day of the Passover verse 1 of Luke 22. Jesus sent those disciples in secrecy to prepare for him to eat the Passover with his disciples.

Verse 11 and when they were sat in that upper room Jesus began the meal Luke tells us saying I have vehemently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

[4 : 08] What Jesus did that night was to transform the Passover into the Lord's Supper. we call it the Last Supper.

Perhaps we would be more accurate if we called it the Last Passover and the First Supper for it was the transition from one to the other. In the Jewish Passover there are more elements more rituals than there are in our Lord's Supper.

There are several cups passed around. There are bitter herbs on the table etc. What Jesus did that night was to take two key parts of the Passover service the distribution of the bread and the drinking of one of the cups of wine and to remodel them into a meal to remember himself.

The most amazing words that the disciples heard that night must have been these this is my body this is my blood do this in remembrance of me.

No longer says Jesus is your attention to be fixed on the Passover lamb's body and blood no longer is your attention to be fixed in remembering Exodus and Moses and Egypt you are to celebrate my body my blood you are to do it in remembrance of me.

[5 : 43] This is now my Passover here in 1 Corinthians 5 we have a very interesting reference by Paul Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us.

Paul assumes that the Christians in Corinth were quite familiar with the notion that Jesus is the performance of the Passover. Paul is not in this chapter giving an explanation of the way in which Jesus died.

He is not in this chapter teaching how Christ was the Passover. In fact he is dealing with a blatant case of immorality that disfigures the life of the church in Corinth.

And as a powerful argument to root out that immorality he says look you know Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us so we shouldn't be living like this.

That's very interesting because it shows that at this early stage 1 Corinthians is one of the earliest of the writings of the New Testament Paul took it for granted that even those predominantly Gentile Christians in Corinth knew that Jesus and his death were closely related to the Passover of the Old Testament.

[7 : 06] The supper reflects that just as the annual Passover feast of the Jews looked back to the celebration in Egypt. The supper is the continuation of that Passover meal as Jesus is the fulfilment of that first Passover.

To appreciate the Lord's supper we need to look at the Passover for the Passover sheds great light on the death of Jesus Christ and on what we are doing in the supper.

The Passover was a great awesome dramatic foundational event in the life of Israel in the Old Testament.

Every year the people held their Passover feasts to recall that great day, to look again at the great change it had made and to celebrate it here and now.

Jesus' death at Calvary was an awesome, great, dramatic, decisive event in the history of our salvation. We hold the Lord's supper regularly to recall that great day, to appreciate the changes that it has made and to celebrate them anew.

[8 : 36] When we put the two things alongside one another, the Passover remembered every year by the Jews, the death of Jesus remembered regularly by his church, then we can see the parallels, we can learn from the vivid story of the Exodus and appreciate what it is that we are celebrating, why the Lord's supper is such a wonderful and a valuable thing in the life of our churches.

So let's look then, having underlined the connection between the two, let's look at what it is that the Passover shows us we are doing when we celebrate the supper.

Jesus Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. The Lord's Supper, our Christian Passover, celebrates that fact.

What precisely are we celebrating? Well, fundamentally, the Passover tells us that in the Lord's Supper we are remembering a sacrifice offered to God.

In the Lord's Supper we are remembering a sacrifice offered to God. That first Passover in Egypt was all about a sacrifice, all about the sacrificing of a lamb.

[10 : 09] and the Lord's Supper is the remembrance that Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed. The angel of death was to pass through Egypt that night, killing all the firstborn of man and beast.

The Passover was a sacrifice that was offered in the houses of the Israelites. A lamb was sacrificed so that an Israelite would not die.

In every house someone had to die under the judgment of God. The difference was that while in the house of the Egyptians the firstborn person died, in the house of the Israelites death came to a lamb instead of to the firstborn.

The lamb was a substitute. The lamb was put to death as a sacrifice to save the life of the firstborn of Israel.

When Jesus instituted the supper he identified himself with the lamb. He said this is my body, this is my blood.

[11 : 29] I don't know if you realise this, it's very simple really, but in the Lord's Supper the most basic part of the ceremony shows us that it is a sacrifice that we are remembering.

Not just a death, not a tragedy, but a sacrifice. Why? Well, because when an animal was taken for sacrifice in the tabernacle, or when the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the house, the animal's throat was cut and the blood poured out of that cut throat and was carefully collected in a basin. Every drop of blood was drained from that animal. And then you had the body, that is the bloodless, lifeless body of the victim, and you had the blood.

The two were separated, the blood in a bowl, the body lying there. In the various sacrifices of the Old Testament, different things were done with the body and the blood.

The blood was sprinkled on the altar or on other parts of the tabernacle. The body was either entirely burnt or part burnt and part eaten. But the whole ritual of a sacrifice began by separating body and blood.

[12 : 52] If somebody just dies through natural causes, the body and the blood are not separated. If somebody is killed violently, the body and the blood are not entirely separated.

Some blood may be still, but still blood remains in the body. Only in a sacrifice is the blood entirely drained from the body.

The two are separated. blood are not in a blood are separated. So when we have the bread and the wine separate, it is not biblical to dip the bread in the wine and to mingle the two together.

That destroys the analogy, that mars the symbolism. The Lord's supper by saying the bread and the wine is saying a sacrifice has been made, a victim has been killed.

the Lord's supper is not a remembrance of a cruel act of injustice in which an innocent man was violently done to death.

[14 : 03] It is not an example of the cruelty and wickedness of this world that we are to lament. It is a remembrance that Jesus Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to die in the place of those who were marked for death.

He died as a substitute, he died as a willing victim, he offered himself, he laid down his life and he was a sacrifice offered to God.

The Passover tells us that Christ died as our Passover Lamb, a sacrifice offered to God for us. Just as the Lamb was sacrificed for the firstborn. And the Passover story so powerfully shows us what Christ's sacrifice achieved.

If you know your way through the intricate maze of the book of Leviticus, you'll know that there were various sorts of sacrifices there described and instituted in the tabernacle.

[15 : 19] There were sacrifices of sin offering and guilt offering, there were peace offerings, there were sacrifices of restitution, and so on. They were sort of the ABC of Biblical teaching.

God breaking the truth of man's sin, of his grace and fellowship, man's duty, and so on, down into simple ABC lessons.

In the Passover, we have something more complex than that. The sacrifice of the Passover did not simply achieve one thing, but a whole package of glorious benefits.

And that is why the Lord's Supper takes us back not to one of the particular sacrifices that were regularly carried on in the tabernacle, but to that great historic sacrifice of the Passover.

There, as we look at the story of Israel coming out of Egypt, we have in vivid human experience in events that we can recognize and think about and grasp, we have the reality of what Jesus achieved by his death, what we are remembering, what we are celebrating as a reality when we come to the Lord's table.

[16 : 47] What then did Jesus achieve by his death? What will the Supper be saying to us this morning as we celebrate it together? Well, the Passover tells us, firstly, that the Supper is remembering that Jesus died to deliver his people from sin and from death.

Jesus' death, Jesus' sacrifice freed us from death and from sin. death, Jesus' death, if the lamb in Egypt had not died, two things would have followed.

The firstborn of Egypt would have been dead by the next morning and Israel would still have been in slavery in Egypt.

because the lamb died, all the firstborn of Israel were still alive the next morning and Israel were no longer slaves.

Let's look at those two things very briefly. Jesus died as our Passover lamb to deliver us from the death, which is the just desert of our sins.

[18 : 13] Only because Jesus died does death, eternal death, pass over us. My friends, let's put it very, very simply.

If Jesus Christ had not died, you and I would be in hell now. If Jesus Christ had not died, you and I would be in hell now.

Jesus, our Passover lamb, by his sacrifice of himself to God, delivered us from the death that was the punishment due to our sins.

That's perhaps familiar ground to us, that it is ground that must be kept clean and clear in our minds.

It is something that ought to be in the forefront of our living every day. It is something that is so familiar that it tends to get buried among all the novelties and pressures of life.

[19 : 27] That is why I believe God has given us this Lord's Supper, to be frequently celebrated in his church, so that we can sweep the dust off the heart of our faith and say, he died, we do not die.

He died, we will not be cast into that second death. Perhaps some of the great hymns of the Christian tradition can help us to express that confidence.

He died to atone for sins not his own. Your debt he has paid, and your work he has done. You all may receive the peace he did leave, who made intercession.

My father forgive. So wrote Charles Wesley. Charlotte Elliot put it in perhaps even more familiar words. Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come.

[20 : 53] Jesus Christ died to take away the sin that would have brought death, eternal death, to you and to me. He not only freed us from death, he freed us from the power of sin.

Those firstborn of Israel were not only alive the next morning, they were free men and women. For in that night, faced with the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh said, go, leave Egypt.

the death of Jesus Christ not only saved us from the death that our sin deserved, it also delivered us from the slavery to sin in which we were held.

Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin. The law could only show how bad our sin was. the law could not deliver us from the grip of sin.

But it is the glory of the gospel that Jesus Christ breaks the grip of sin on our life. Oh yes, Romans 7, we still have a problem with sin.

[22 : 08] So often we still fall into sin and we need daily pardon. But, Romans 8, if the spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead is in you, then he will put to death sin in your life.

He will make your life alive in the fullest sense. The law could not do it because it was weak, but Christ by his spirit has broken the chains of sin.

And you can now by his grace have victory over sin. You are no longer the helpless slaves of sin. You are no longer the slaves of Satan.

Jesus Christ on the cross broke the power of Satan. Before, you were in chains to Satan. You were controlled by the prince of this world.

But now, Satan is bound and you are free. Satan's on a long chain. He still clanks around troubling and tempting us.

[23 : 11] But since the cross, it is Satan who is bound, no longer us. Before the cross, we were all our lives in bondage through the fear of death.

But Jesus freed us by his Passover sacrifice. The death of that lamb freed Israel from death and from Egypt.

We come to the Lord's table to rejoice in the fact that Jesus died, took away the guilt of our sin, freed us from the iron grip of Satan and sin and death, so that we are now free to serve God and to live with him.

But that's not all. That's wonderful. It'll take us all eternity and more to exhaust the praises of him who has done that. But the Passover tells us that Jesus took us out and began a new life for us. Or to put it in other words, the Passover tells us that in the supper we are celebrating the birth of a nation. That first Passover was the time when the Israelites became Israel.

[24 : 38] A nation was born that day. long before that, of course, God had given his promise to Abraham. God had chosen Abraham and his family to be his covenant people.

But it's quite clear that up till the time of the Passover the Israelites were a series of families, they were an ethnic group in Egypt.

They were scattered there as a slave people, the descendants of Jacob. them. Later though, we find them as a nation with their own land, with their own rulers, with their own national identity and life.

When did the families of Israelites become the nation of Israel? And there's only one answer to that question. The answer is at the Passover, that day was the day when the nation of Israel was born. From that day, and you remember that the Jewish day begins in the evening, so that when the Passover lamb was killed in the evening, that was the beginning of the day. In the night Pharaoh called for Moses and told him to take the people out, and in the daylight hours that followed that night, Israel set out from Egypt.

[26 : 05] In our terms, the lamb was killed one evening and the next day they went out. But in Jewish terms, it was in the same day, the day that began with the killing of the Passover lamb, saw Israel going out of Egypt.

And how did they go out? As a bunch of families fleeing in every direction, some going to Libya, some going south, some going east?

No. They went out as a company. They went out as a band. They went out as a community. They went out a new nation.

True, it was only when they reached Mount Sinai and God met with them there in a special way that they were given the laws and the rules of their nation. But even before they got to Mount Sinai, they were living as a nation, ruled by Moses under God.

God. That's a very, very important point to recall. The Passover marked the beginning of the national life of the covenant people.

[27 : 16] That's symbolised by the fact that the Passover month was the first month of the Jewish year. As Exodus chapter 12 verse 2 says, this month shall be the beginning of months for you.

the life of the nation, indicated by their calendar, began at the Passover time. Jesus Christ died to save us from sin, from death, from bondage.

True. But he also died to make us the church. The church of Jesus Christ, in a sense, traces its history right back to the garden of Eden and to God's gracious promise to the newly fallen Adam and Eve.

But in a stricter sense, the church of Jesus Christ is a New Testament church. When did it begin?

Well, you say on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were endued with the gifts, and when the Spirit came and gave to that church his indwelling presence and power.

true, that the day of Pentecost was like the events at Mount Sinai in the history of the Exodus. And just as that was the formal ratification of something that had happened 50 days before, so Pentecost was ratifying, equipping the church, the church which had begun on the day when Jesus died.

[28 : 55] The death of Jesus created the Christian church. What this is saying to us is this.

What the Lord's Supper shows us so clearly is that we have been saved into a new nation. You are a chosen people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, says Peter to the Christian church, using those Old Testament terms.

The Lord's Supper says you must not think of your experience of Christ, your relationship with Christ, as a purely private thing. In the biblical era, the Passover was celebrated at Jerusalem. Every Jew above a certain age was, if possible, to get to Jerusalem so that they could celebrate the Passover in that city that was compactly built together.

And you and I do not celebrate the Lord's Supper in our quiet times. Jesus Christ did not tell you to get some bread and wine, and every so often in that private closet where you pray and meditate, to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance that he died as a sacrifice for your sins.

[30 : 17] Jesus says you are to come together to eat the Passover. The church is to come together to remember his death. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.