

# bb-TBC-61

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## Christ our Passover - bb-TBC-61

It did seem such a strange way of expressing something.

They were gathered in an annual celebration designed to look backwards to the key event of their history and yet he seemed to have his gaze in the opposite direction, not looking backwards but forwards.

I am referring to Christ's comment in the upper room. We have seen previously how key this time was and the enormous percentage of time, in the gospels, that is given to these few hours. His words were;

▼ Luke 22:15-16

"With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Luke 22:15-16 NKJV.

There are three elements in this sentence.

1. There is the celebration of the Passover, the annual remembrance of the first step of God's deliverance and the first step towards the making of a covenant between the nation and God at Sinai.
2. Then there is the clear prediction of his suffering.
3. Then there is a statement that the Passover will be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. How can we understand the Passover as needing a 'fulfilment'?

## The Last Supper or the First?

As far as we know from the Scripture record the Passover Lamb is the only sacrifice that Jesus offered personally. Jewish patterns have changed over the centuries but we can create a legitimate scenario for the celebration in the upper room.

The very first Passover meal had taken place with the guests all standing in readiness for the Exodus, but from the time that the nation inherited the land the pattern was to sit, or rather recline, to indicate that they had entered into God's rest.

The cup or chalice was shared several times in the feast and Luke's record mentions two of these.

- According to the Jewish ritual the 'third cup' was shared at the end of the meal and it seems that this is the point at which Christ transposed the backwards look of Passover into the forward look of the Communion meal.

- It seems as though the last or 'fourth cup' was being postponed until the kingdom of God fully arrived.

## The Kingdom of God

The 'kingdom of God' is a phrase that can be understood at different levels. In a sense where the king is, there is the kingdom. It is not a physical, territorial, realm but the comprehensive rule of the king. Consequently, in Christ 'the once and future king', the kingdom of God is both present and future.

He lived his life within the kingdom but for others entrance into that kingdom must be by a birth that is 'by water and by Spirit'. As the Spirit had not yet been given at the first sharing of the Communion meal, entrance into that kingdom was still in the future when the meal was first celebrated.

### Luke's Record

The Luke account goes on to quote the words of the institution of the Communion and includes the phrase;

▼ Luke 22:20

"This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:20 NKJV.

## The Kingdom of God and the New Covenant

We begin to see the same alignment of phrases; the kingdom of God and the New Covenant in this passage. These concepts are really inseparable. This is the significance of the reference to the need for the 'Passover' to be fulfilled.

The Passover was not merely an historical event it was another of those shadows and patterns. The original Passover gave an outline in two dimensions that must now be fulfilled in three dimensions with the full colour of spiritual reality.

This idea became a settled concept in the early church. When Paul instructs the church in Corinth to put their house in order his proof text is this concept;

▼ 1 Cor 5:7

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our

Passover, was sacrificed for us. 1 Cor 5:7 NKJV.

## Expanding the Type and Shadow

With that clear identification of Christ as the fulfilment of the Passover shadow we can expand the type.

### ▼ Exodus 12:1–12

And Jehovah spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

a new beginning:

This resets the clocks. The Exodus was such a 'paradigm shift' that it changed the calendar.

On one occasion Peter excused his going into the home of a Gentile by saying...

### ▼ Acts 11:15–16

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 11:15–16 NKJV)

Again and again, when Israel broke the Covenant God reminded them of these 'beginnings' of their nation.

Entrance into the New Covenant changes our calendar too.

### ▼ 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV)

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household: and if the household be too little for a lamb,

then shall he and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; **according to every man's eating** ye shall make your count for the lamb.



the central point is the eating of the lamb

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at even. And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon **the houses wherein they shall eat it.**



the 'eating of the lamb' repeated as the central theme.

This daubing of the blood was never repeated, but the sacrificial feast of 'the lamb' was repeated year by year.

The central character of the drama of that terrible night was the Lamb that was sacrificed, and their sharing of it in their homes. The outward sign for the Avenging Angel was the blood on the lintel and doorposts that signified that the families were 'feeding' the Lamb, but the event began the annual reminder of their deliverance.

▼ Exodus 12:1–12

And **they shall eat the flesh** in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. **And 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 Jehovah's passover.** For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Jehovah.

(Exodus 12:1–12 ASV)

The original Passover was the first event in the process that led to Israel's redemption and their acceptance as God's covenant nation. A sentence of death

hung over all the first-born sons in Egypt and only those who shared in the Passover meal were spared.

The sign that the inhabitants of a home were sharing the Passover meal, the lamb's blood, was daubed on the lintels and doorposts. God 'saw the blood' and 'passed-over', hence the name of the annual celebration.

▼ Exodus 12:7

And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. (Exodus 12:7 ASV)

It is important to draw attention to the meaning of the outward sign. (In future celebrations of the Passover they never daubed the doorposts and lintels again but they did eat the lamb year by year.) It meant that those within that home had sacrificed their lamb and were even now eating its flesh. They ate with their shoes on their feet, their staff in their hands, their packs on their back and with their robes tucked into their belts; they were ready to march.

Most of the details of the Exodus Passover are concerned with the manner of 'eating' rather than of 'splashing' blood on the entrance, and later references usually focus on those who were allowed to share the annual sacrifice.

The uncircumcised were not permitted to share in the Passover Sacrifice, but strangers from outside Israel could... as long as they had been circumcised.

This is significant. People outside the Covenant were allowed to share the Covenant Meal, but only if they had been circumcised.

## **Deliverance and Nationhood**

The story is too well known to need a retelling here.

Ultimately they came to the Red Sea and crossed safely on dry ground. Their enemies, attempting to follow them, came under judgment. They were not spared.

The event is described, as we have seen, as a baptism by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. They were baptised into, or united by baptism into, Moses.

▼ 1 Corinthians 10:1–6

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all

ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:1–5 NKJV)

They were one people but not yet in the fullest sense 'God's people', that must await the making of the Sinai Covenant;

▼ Ex 19:1-6

In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. And when they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mount.

And Moses went up unto God, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:1–6 ASV)

This Sinai Covenant was a covenant between Jehovah and the 'children of Israel'; this included not just descendants of Israel, the man, but included others who had

become absorbed into their 'tribes'.

These are the opening words of the covenant-making event. They do deserve a pause and an observation even though we are treading on familiar ground. "You shall be, to me, a kingdom of priests". This people were about to become 'God's kingdom'. A kingdom made up not of warriors but of those who served God as his personal servants. The nation was designed to be, in essence and type, the living embodiment of the kingdom of God.

The first/old covenant created a physical kingdom of God; the second/New Covenant would create a spiritual kingdom of God. The kingdom and the covenant are synchronised concepts.

In its earthly expression the 'kingdom of God' is most closely seen in the pattern of the priests and their service of God.

The Tabernacle was God's kingdom in microcosm, entrance to the Holy Place was only permitted to those who had undergone a ritual bathing and received ritual sprinklings of blood and sprinkling of anointing oil; the priests themselves.

This was like a kingdom within a kingdom and accessible, in ancient times, only to Aaron and those who shared his bloodline.

## Going, going... gone!

It was glorious. So says Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians,

### ▼ 2 Corinthians 3:2–11

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but **our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant,** not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For

if what is passing away was glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.(2 Corinthians 3:2–11 NKJV)

But Israel's Glorious Sinai Covenant was a fading glory. Typified in the fading glory seen in the face of the mediator of the Old Covenant, it changed from glory to glory in a descending spiral.

We must never denigrate the Sinai Covenant. It was glorious. But it was not, says Paul, like the glory of the New Covenant. It was, in that sense, just a promise of greater things; the earthly natural Passover was but a prelude to the heavenly and spiritual reality.

Or as the writer to the Hebrews tells us... it was not perfect.

▼ Hebrews 7:19

for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:19 NKJV)

▼ Hebrews 10:1

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. (Hebrews 10:1 NKJV)

It was not an end in itself but a pattern of a greater Passover leading to a better covenant.

This better or new covenant also 'changes from glory to glory' but in an ascending spiral!

The pattern of the Exodus and the Sinai covenant is frequently just under the surface in the New Testament writings. The language with which they describe the New Covenant is taken from the events of the Passover and Exodus and the Conquest of the Land. A good example of this is found in the epistle to the Colossians...

which, God willing, we will look into at the next episode of The Better Covenant - revisited... same time, same place.. until then, thank you for coming to share our journey and we look forward to you company, next week