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Communion And The Passover Feast. (2013)

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Communion and the Passover Feast.

Topics.

- Overview of the Passover in the Old Testament.
- The purpose of the Passover Feast.
- Passover in the New Testament.
- The Lord's Supper in Matthew.
- The wine as a symbol of Christ's blood.
- The Lord's Supper in Luke.
- The Lord's Supper in Acts.
- The Lord's Supper in Corinthians.

An overview of the Passover in the Old Testament: Israel had been in bondage to Egypt for four-hundred and thirty years, God sends Moses to tell Pharaoh to let God's people go, but even after God tries to warn the King by many mighty miracles he remains stubborn and refuses, so the Angel of the LORD strikes Egypt's firstborn. Pharaoh, all his servants and all Egyptians rose up in the night and in every Egyptian house there was someone who had died, there was a great cry in Egypt and the Egyptians willingly gave the people of Israel silver, gold jewellery and clothing so they would leave. There were about six hundred thousand (600, 000) Israelite men on foot, besides women and children. This is what the Passover Feast was about it was an annual meal to remember the day God delivered Israel from the house of slavery and bondage (Egypt).

Israel was to keep the Passover when they entered into the land of Canaan they were to observe the Passover at its appointed time from year to year as a statute for them and their sons forever. The first month was called Abib (our April) and was Israel's first month of the year, this is why it was called the beginning of months. When the Passover Feast was held, the fourteenth day was a memorial day throughout Israel's generations to remember that the LORD brought Israel out of the land of Egypt (the house of slavery) and the fifteenth day was a holy assembly (Sabbath Day) and leaven was to be removed out of Israel's houses and no ordinary work was to be done.

The purpose of the Passover Feast: was so that Israel's future generations would never forget how Israel became a nation (in one day). Every year the children would ask their fathers, "What does this feast mean?" So the adults were able to teach their children that Pharaoh King of Egypt stubbornly refused to let Israel go out of Egypt (Egypt is called the house of slavery). So God struck the Egyptians in their houses, but He spared the people who had the blood of the lamb (without blemish) on their doorpost and by many other mighty miracles the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt the house of slavery.

Passover in the New Testament.

The word supper comes from the Greek word (deipnon) and in Strong's Concordance means, a dinner the chief meal (usually in the evening) and carries the idea of people having a feast together.

The Lord's Supper in Matthew.

Just prior to Jesus prayer of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and his death and resurrection he instituted what is today called the Lord's last Supper with his apostles (and by extension all who faithfully follow him).

This Supper was a Passover Meal which was of all the annual Jewish feasts the most important. This meal was also called the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover. It commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt and the establishment of Israel as a nation by God's redemptive act. The Passover Meal followed a fairly standard pattern in every Jewish household, first came the opening prayer and the blessing of the cup and bread, then each person would take some bitter herbs and dip them in a dish.

The head of the family would then take one of the three flat cakes of unleavened bread, break it and put some aside, then in response to a question from the youngest member of the family the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt by God's mighty hand was recounted with the climax of the ritual being the festive meal of roast lamb (without blemish).

This is my Blood of the Covenant, which is Poured out for Many.

Matthew 26:20-28 ---- ²⁰When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. ²¹And as they were eating --- NOW GO TO VERSE --- ²⁶Now as they (the apostles) were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and *gave it* to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks *he gave it* to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 14:20-26) (Luke 22:18-25) (say the same thing).

Jesus is teaching the following two principles in these verses: -

1. To remember what Christ has done. The words, "this is" in (Matt. 26:28) obviously does not mean his literal blood because Jesus is actually there himself giving the disciples the bread and wine. Jesus words, "this is" simply means this represents my blood and my body. Gethsemane is at the heart of the Lord's Supper and explains its meaning, Jesus knowing Old Testament prophecy and that all the animal sacrifices offered on the altar for sin where types and shadows of the sacrifice of himself. Jesus knew he was the final Passover Lamb without blemish to be offered up for the deliverance of his people.

The wine as a symbol of Christ's blood speaks of Jesus death and the new covenant, which reconciles man to God through faith. In the Old Testament the LORD said, when He sees the blood of the lamb (without blemish) He would pass over his people and no plague would destroy them when he strikes the people of Egypt. In the New Testament when God sees those who have put their trust and faith in Christ for their salvation He sees Christ's blood covering them, meaning He sees that Christ has given his own life for them that is why those who belong to Christ are to remember the significance of what Jesus has done for them until he comes again.

2. To share the food and drink we have with others in fellowship. The apostles were eating a meal, Jesus gave the bread, symbolising his body, which is given for them and gave the cup which, was poured out for them, thus the second principal Jesus is teaching is the principle of sharing and giving to others.

The Lord's Supper in Luke.

Luke 22:18-21 ----- ¹⁸Jesus said, "I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine (drink wine) until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹And he took bread, (representing food) and when he had given thanks, he broke it and *gave it* to them, saying, "This is my body, which is *given* for you. *do this* in remembrance of me." ²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out *for you* is the new covenant in my blood.

Jesus gives and shares his food and drink and then says do this in remembrance of me, the thing we should be doing in remembrance of Christ is sharing our food with those who have none as often as we meet. The Lord's Supper (chief meal) is about giving and sharing in with each other a spirit of thanksgiving in the Lord's name.

This Lord's Supper is not limited to once every Sunday nor is it limited to only being held within church buildings. This is something we can do in Christ whenever we come together to share a meal in the Lord's name. It can be in our homes or at a picnic under the beautiful blue sky. It is not the location that is important, but the focus of the heart, the mind and the conversation because it is a meal that is celebrating our deliverance from death to eternal life by the precious blood of Christ.

The Lord's Supper in Acts.

Acts 20:7 ----- ⁷On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread.

On the first day of the week was not meant to be taken as a legalistic command, or mean that Sunday was the only day those who belong to Christ could share the Lord's Supper together. Jesus in other verses says, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup do it in remembrance of me. In modern language Jesus is simply saying whenever you have a meal together do it in remembrance of me.

In Jesus day the term breaking bread was common and colloquial language it was of the day which simply meant let's have a meal together. When Christians gathered together to have a meal in Jesus name, whether it was in their homes or in a church on a Sunday or midweek it was the Lord's Supper. The following event is just after the gift of tongues had been poured out and Peter preached his message to the multitude and three thousand were saved.

- All who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they (those that were saved) were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need (they were giving and sharing). ⁴⁶ (The apostles and those that believed) *day by day*, attended the temple together and *broke bread in their homes* and they received their food with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:44).

NOTICE: they were breaking the bread day by day in their homes not in the Temple. Breaking bread is about sharing food together with faithful brothers and sisters who have and with those who have not. Everyday these disciples were meeting together and sharing their food and drink with each other, in the same way that the Old Testament Passover was always a feast (i.e., meal that believers shared together).

The Lord's Supper in Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:17-34).

1 Cor. 11:17-19 ----- ¹⁶But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

Paul rebukes the Corinthians for the way they take the Lord's Supper he tells them when they come together as a church what they are doing is wrong, because they have divisions among them. Notice verse nineteen implies that there were people eating the Passover with them that were not even in the faith or part of them.

1 Cor. 11:20 ----- ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

Paul tells them it is not the Lord's Supper that they eat, because each one goes ahead eating his own meal and getting drunk while the poor who have nothing remain hungry.

1 Cor. 11:22 ----- ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

The people with plenty humiliate those who have little or nothing the picture these verses paint is a group of people eating a meal, but not sharing it with those that have nothing.

1 Cor. 11:23-25 ----- ²³For I (Paul) received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this *in remembrance of me*." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, *as often* as you drink it, *in remembrance of me*."

Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," What is it Jesus is telling us to do? It is to give thanks for the food and the wine as often as we share a meal together and share it with those less fortunate. Remember in Jesus time there was no government aid for the less fortunate, poor people struggled to find food and could never afford the luxury of tasting wine. Jesus shared his food and drink, with those at his table and told them to do the same thing as he was doing, and to do it in remembrance of him.

1 Cor. 11:26 ----- ²⁶For *as often* as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Paul tells the Corinthians that by sharing and giving what they have they are proclaiming the Lord's death because that is what his death is all about. Jesus had previously told the disciples, when they have a feast or meal in his name they are to give thanks to God and then break the bread and give it to others.

The concept or idea of the Lord's Supper is that Christians share their food and drink in remembrance of the Lord because this is what he did, by giving their food and drink to the less fortunate they are proclaiming the Lord's death because giving is what his ministry and death is all about. Jesus gave freely of his body and his life during his ministry of serving others on earth.

Jesus said: -

- God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The heart of the Christian faith in regards to our neighbour is to give and share what we have, it is to show kindness and help when we are able especially to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul gives a warning to the Corinthians saying: -

1 Cor. 11:27-29 ----- ²⁷Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body (KJV the Lord's Body) eats and drinks judgment on himself.

If believers do not share or give their food and drink to the less fortunate when they come together to eat a meal in the Lord's name then they do not understand what Christ's life, ministry and death is all about. Let a person examine himself means that each individual believer should be asking themselves the following two questions: -

1. At this meal am I being selfish or giving?
2. At this meal am I eating to myself or sharing what I have with the less fortunate?

If a person eats and drinks to themselves without sharing what they have, they do not understand what the body (Christ' body or the church) is all about.

Paul says: -

- Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it (1 Cor. 12:27).

The body in this context can be both the Lord's body and the church. Many today think that the church is the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings, though they maybe a part of the body of Christ but they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him.

Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives. God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth.

Paul is telling the Corinthian brothers and sisters that because of their selfishness their less fortunate brothers and sisters are sick. It appears that the wealthy and noble with good clothing and abundant food and wine did not consider those who were poor and in the lower class to be part of the body of Christ. They were considered far too lowly and common to be in the same group as the so called elite that is why Paul says they are not discerning the body of Christ. Jesus does not look on a person's outward appearance, but the humbleness, honesty, intent and motive of the heart toward God.

1 Cor. 11:30-32 ----- ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²When we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Because the rich and noble are not sharing their food with the less fortunate many of them (the less fortunate) are weak, sick and some have even died, remember the poor had no support from the Roman Government, many of them simply died of malnutrition as they do today in third world countries. Those that are eating to themselves and not sharing their food with their less fortunate brothers and sisters are being judged by Paul and will be judged when they stand before the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is basically saying to avoid being judged now and in the future be a giving and sharing person. Paul is rebuking them for not eating in a worthy manner, he is bringing the Lord's judgment on them and disciplining them, this is often how the Lord's judgment will come. Believers do something wrong in the Lord that dishonours God and discredits Christ's name and another faithful disciple or believer rebukes and disciplines them so they will not continue their error and be judged by others or on the ultimate day of judgment.

1 Cor. 11:33-34 ----- ³³When you come together to eat, wait for one another ³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home means, if a person is starving then eat some food at home so he or she can come together with the group to eat and share what they have, this is basic courtesy and manners. Paul is saying when you come together as a group to eat, wait for one another before eating, share your food and drink with others then our feasting together will not lead to judgment as it has in this instance.

SUMMARY.

The Lord's Supper applies to those meals believers eat together as a group, each brother and sister in the Lord represent the Lord so should understand that Jesus life was about giving and sharing therefore when they are eating a meal in remembrance of the Lord they should give and share the food and drink that they have.

If they do this others would not judge them, they would not need to be rebuked or disciplined (meaning corrected) and better still the weak and poor among them would not be weak, sick and even dying because those with food and drink would be sharing it with them. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). This means whenever two or more

believers' come together to share the word and fellowship in a house, at river or in building etc., Jesus is with them, likewise whenever two or more believers come together to fellowship and share a meal and give thanks to the Lord and share their food and drink with each other Jesus is with them this is why the meal is called the Lord's Supper, they are eating it in his name and in his presence.

For further information see the titles: -

- Passover in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

End