

As we open to I Corinthians 5:7 and listen as Paul speaks to a primarily gentile, New Testament church, we hear him teaching believers of all the ages of Christ's Church that:

### **CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER**

The Passover is not merely an Old Testament Jewish event, for Paul instructed the New Testament church to be familiar with all that the Passover portrayed when he wrote,

“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 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV)

Paul encouraged the church not to revert back to the law-keeping bondage of Judaism, but to see that in simple beauty, the substitutionary death of Christ is declared by each element of that Last Supper. The Passover Memorial meal was in Paul's day, and is this evening, profoundly instructive to all who will stop and see Christ portrayed.

The Passover meal, called the Seder, is a picture of the death and resurrection of Christ.

\*\*\*In the middle of the ritual, a piece of Matzah (unleavened bread that is striped and pierced in the baking process) is broken into three pieces. To rabbinic consternation, the three pieces of matzo speak of our triune God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

\*\*\*The second piece is wrapped in white linen and hidden away for a little while, and then found amid great rejoicing. That broken<sup>1</sup> second piece of matzo is called the “Afikomen.”

### **The Seder Pictures Christ**

The broken piece of matzo then takes the place of the Passover lamb, and everyone present must partake of it.

Inexplicably, "Afikomen" is the only Greek word in the Jewish Seder ceremony. Translated, it simply means - "**I came**" (second aorist of the verb "ikneomai").

This broken piece of unleavened bread is explained in the New Testament as a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ Who CAME!

Every time you look at the Passover Matzah remember it is—

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<sup>1</sup> Marv Rosenthal, The Lord's Table in light of the Passover, Friends of Israel, n.d.

- **Striped:** (“By His stripes are we healed”),
- **Pierced:** (“They shall look upon me whom they’ve pierced”), and,
- **Pure:** without any leaven, as Christ’s body was without any sin.

What an incredible picture and prediction of how Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, would be:

- wounded with the cruel barbs of the scourge;
- pierced with the head of a Roman spear,
- wrapped in clean, white linen, and
- hidden away in a borrowed tomb.

Today, our Wonderful Merciful Savior is here, and as we unite our voices to worship Him, join me singing:

**Wonderful merciful Savior,**  
 Precious redeemer and friend,  
 Who would have thought that a Lamb could  
 Rescue the souls of men?  
 O, You rescue the souls of men!

CHORUS  
 You are the One that we praise  
 You are the one we adore  
 You give the healing and grace  
 Our hearts always hunger for  
 O, our hearts always hunger for.

Verse 2  
 Counselor, Comforter, Keeper  
 Spirit we long to embrace  
 You offer hope when our hearts have  
 Hopelessly lost the way  
 Oh, we’ve hopelessly lost the way

Almighty, infinite Father  
 Faithfully loving Your own  
 Here in our weakness You find us  
 Falling before Your throne  
 O, we’re falling before Your throne

To best understand this communion, go with me back to the time of Christ and:

### **REMEMBER CHRIST'S BOYHOOD PASSOVERS**

It was for **thirty years Jesus followed His family to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41) at each Passover season.**

It was Jesus who as the oldest son<sup>2</sup> was either leading, or holding in His arms the lamb, which the group from Nazareth wished to sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Cleveland, Ohio: Collins World, 1977, p. 61.

When they finally reached the Temple and Joseph took over, He must have handed over the lamb with a look of intense sorrow in his eyes.

In his heart he seemed to be sharing the tragedy of the lamb, while a Levite's voice sounded out Isaiah's famous words, while all those in line with their individual family's lambs were waiting their turn for the lamb to be slaughtered for their Passover meal.

**\*\*\*Join me in reading Isaiah's prophesy of Christ (53:3-6):**

He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrow; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

After hearing those words, the lamb was taken, slaughtered and handed back after being butchered and skinned for the Passover Meal.

**\*\*\*Amazingly, *it's* ceremonially *clean body was slit down the middle and kept open by two pieces of wood*—IN THE FORM OF A CROSS.**

### **What an Amazing Picture of Christ**

The lamb slain, the cross of wood, the words from Isaiah—all these powerful pictures hinting of Christ's destiny must have filled the mind and heart of the boy Christ Jesus.

Now, fast forward in your minds to the end of Christ's ministry as we retrace the events of<sup>3</sup> the Passover events of the day Christ was crucified. After Christ's Passover meal, He was arrested, tried, abused and taken by the Romans to be crucified.

During all these events, happening out of sight to Jesus, the army of Passover Levites have just opened the doors of the Temple, so that the crowds can enter to offer their sacrificial lambs.

At 9 AM, which was the specified time, **at exactly the same moment**, three events were taking place:

- Israel's high priest was tying the Passover lamb for the Nation, to the Temple's altar awaiting its sacrifice;
- Each head of household hands his lamb over to a Levite to slaughter for his family; and
- **AT THAT VERY MOMENT**, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, **Jesus was being nailed to the Cross to hang, and bleed.**

<sup>3</sup> John Hagee, *His Glory Revealed*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pp. 9-11.

For six hours both the lamb tied at the altar, and Jesus the Lamb of God nailed to the Cross awaited death.

At noon as the thousands of individual lambs continue to be brought into the Temple, **the sky darkens**, and the crowds inside the Temple grow silent and pensive.

- ***While the stones of the Temple courtyard run red with the blood thousands of lambs and goats***, the Lamb of God continues to spill His life's blood outside the city.
- While the father in each household is in line for slaughtering a lamb for the sake of his family, ***God the Father is slaughtering His holy Lamb for the sake of all who would accept Christ's gift of forgiveness and eternal life.***

At 3 PM (or exactly the ninth hour), the high priest ascended the altar in the temple and in front of the gathered crowds, holding up a knife, cuts across the throat of the lamb being sacrificed for the Nation.

- At that very same moment, barely able to lift His blood-spattered face toward heaven, Christ's hoarse words thundered out over the city of Jerusalem, and across the Universe in triumph, ***"It is finished!"*** (John 19:30).
- At that moment on Calvary's stark mountain, God the Father, the final High Priest of all creation, placed His holy hand on the head of His only begotten Son, allowing the sin of the world to descend upon Jesus.

What wondrous love!

What amazing grace! Never forget it.

**\*\*\*Now, as the men prepare to serve us, think on:**

### **Christ as the Passover Bread**

Remember how I told you at the beginning that in the Passover meal, we see a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ?

It is exactly here, in the middle of every Passover ritual, that a piece of Matzah (unleavened bread that is striped and pierced in the baking process) already broken into three pieces.

Already wrapped in white linen and hidden away for a little while, is now found amid great rejoicing. The broken piece of Matzah then takes the place of the Passover lamb, and everyone present must partake of it. Inexplicably, "Afikomen" is the only Greek word in the Seder ceremony. It simply means—***"I came"*** because we know that Jesus came to be:

- "Broken" because His body was broken;
- "Wrapped" because His body was wrapped in preparation for the grave;
- "Hidden" from view because He lay three days unseen in the tomb; and always
- "Brought forth" because He arose on the third day;

This broken piece of unleavened bread is explained in the New Testament as a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ Who CAME!

Christ shouts from every piece of bread used by the Jews during Passover. While holding your piece of bread, sing to Him who is pictured by this bread a song of worship:

### ***Worthy is the Lamb***

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain-To receive, Power and Riches and Wisdom and Strength, Honor and Glory and Blessing

Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, Worthy is the Lamb!

Together we can declare our thanks to the Lord, repeat after me those first six words of that chorus, addressed in worship to Jesus Christ:

### **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!**

Now partake together with me of your bread as we remember Him.

\*\*\*As the men now come to pass the cup to each of us, think again of Jesus crucified for us. His arms were outstretched and nailed to the cross. His precious blood was shed for all mankind, so that through His sacrifice, all who believe can have forgiveness of sins and salvation.

Please join me in celebrating our redemption as we worship in song, with just our voices, our Messiah who came to give Himself as our Passover Lamb!

### ***And Can it Be***

And can it be that I should gain, An int'rest in the Savior's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

So this cup reminds us of **the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ** that was spilled because of us and on our behalf.

This cup reminds us that **God was in Christ reconciling** the world to Himself.

This cup is **our thanks to God** for the grace that transforms us and the grace that brings us from darkness into His marvelous light.

At this moment in the meal 2000 years ago Jesus held the cup out to His disciples and said, "Drink from it all of you."

### **Let us drink our cups together.**

Our Last Supper Passover is now complete, just as our redemption is complete.

As Jesus left, he promised He would come again. And so as we await Christ's soon Coming, **let me**

**challenge you to make Passover<sup>4</sup> real in your life every day.**

During the Christmas holidays we often speak of keeping Christmas in every day of the year, but how much more precious is the message of the Christ of the Cross portrayed by the Last Supper Passover!

Without the Lamb of God's supreme sacrifice, we would be lost for eternity!

After the last Supper the Gospels tells us that Jesus sang a hymn with them and went out into the dark night of betrayal and abuse.

***Before the Throne of God Above***

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high Priest whose Name is Love, Who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on His hands, My name is written on His heart. I know that while in Heaven He stands, No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair, And tells me of the guilt within, Upward I look and see Him there, Who made an end of all my sin.

Because the sinless Savior died, My sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied, To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there the risen Lamb, My perfect spotless righteousness, The great unchangeable I AM, King of glory and of grace,

One in Himself I cannot die. My soul is purchased by His blood, My life is hid with Christ on high, With Christ my Savior and my God!

**And all God's People said—AMEN!**

Quietly, reverently, but triumphantly and joyfully we depart for our homes

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<sup>4</sup> John Hagee, *His Glory Revealed*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pp. 18-20.