

Tonight

First Corinthians:
The Passover Epistle

- and -

Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Message of Salvation to All

Romans 10:13-21

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

¹⁷ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, **“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”**

²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, **“I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”**

²¹ But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

Romans 11:11-16 – Gentiles Grafted In

¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

We want, not only for our own edification, but also for the salvation of Jews, to be able to know how Jesus Christ fulfills all the Feasts of the Lord. How better to provoke a Jew to jealousy than to be able to lovingly and respectfully point out that Christ fulfills all the Feasts.

Passover / Feasts (in the epistles)

Before we get to First Corinthians, where Paul refers to or alludes to Passover / Feasts in three separate sections, we must note that in other letters Paul addresses dietary laws, the feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths as “a shadow” compared to “the substance,” which belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16 - 17).

¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Context of Colossians 2:16-17

The context was that Judaizing teachers sought to impose upon Christians the yoke of the ceremonial law. In effect, these Jewish teachers required that the Christians effectively convert (become Jews) in order to follow Christ. Thus, the Judaizers argued that

Salvation = Christ + The Ceremonial Law

Paul, in Colossians, is addressing Gentile Christians, encouraging them to disregard Jewish critics who required them to observe special days since Gentiles were never obligated by God to follow the Mosaic calendar.

Further Context of Colossians 2

¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

We want to beware of anything, any little “pet” study, that we would seek to add to Christ or substitute for Christ or distract us from the focus on Christ (the Head)

Galatians

- In Galatians, Paul addresses Gentile believers who are choosing to get circumcised in order to be justified before God. Paul dissuades them from undergoing this ritual lest they forfeit Christ himself and the justification he achieved on their behalf (Galatians 5:2).
- Nevertheless there is nothing in these passages that speak against Jewish believers celebrating the feasts or anything that speaks against Gentile celebrating them with a heart of faith.
- In fact, Paul's wording in Colossians 2:17 implies that the "shadows" still have present-day importance because he uses the present tense verb in stating that "*these are a shadow of the things to come*". Paul did not believe that the feasts were a thing of the past, but rather a shadow with present-day anticipatory features. Accordingly, in Paul's mind the feasts still hold significant relevance to believers.
- These can be an aid to us as Gentile Christians to see all that Christ has fulfilled and the nuances of all that he is accomplished on our behalf (as well as a witness to Jews).

End: Let's turn now to 1 Corinthians with a view to considering how Paul uses the Corinthians' knowledge of the feasts (specifically Passover / Lord's Supper and Feast of Unleavened Bread) by way of instruction on how a Christian ought to live. But first, a quick summary of the three feasts ... because we will talk about them in the context of these three passages in 1 Cor.

Quick Summary of Three Feasts

- **Passover** – pictures the substitutionary *death* of the Messiah as the Passover Lamb
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** – pictures the *burial* of the Messiah (holiness)
- **Firstfruits** – pictures the *resurrection* of the Messiah

The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates the purging of all leaven (a symbol of sin). In this way, Christ has cleansed all believers from sin and empowered them in newness of life. Why, because in Christ's burial, he did not see corruption.

First of Three Passages in First Corinthians
1 Cor 5:6-8

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

End: Let's put Paul's rebuke to the Corinthian church in the context of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (referenced in v. 8)

Instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exo. 12:17-20)

¹⁷ And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, ***for on this very day*** I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever.

¹⁸ In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. ²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.”

“Unleavened Bread” Analogy

- Leaven/yeast is compared to sin throughout Scripture (Matt 16:6; Mark 8:15; Luke 1:1; Gal 5:9).
- Leaven is well-suited as a picture of sin since it rapidly permeates the dough, contaminating it, souring it, fermenting it, and swelling it to many times its original size without changing its weight
- In fact, this souring process (the first stage of decay) is operative solely because of the curse of death decreed by God when Adam sinned

“Unleavened Bread” Analogy (con’d)

Given the Grave of Joseph of A. (Matt 27:57-60)

Isaiah 53:9

“And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”

- Jesus died a criminal’s death (becoming a curse for us as he was hung upon a tree); but was honoured in His burial because He was a pure, sinless (without leaven) sacrifice

Psalm 16:10

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.”

- David’s prophetic psalm was fulfilled in the Christ’s body not decaying in the grave (like dough soured by leaven)

As that summary provided (a few slides ago), the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the burial of Jesus. In the midst of burial, Jesus was honoured, but he also did not see corruption or decay. In that same way, this feast is to encourage holy living. God has called us to be holy for He is holy.

“Unleavened Bread” Analogy (con’d)

- Paul is identifying that leaven has the same impact on bread as sin does on the church:
 - sin that is known and unrepented of, and not addressed by the church has the effect of infecting the whole church, which is inconsistent with their justification in Christ.
- The immediate context of this passage is that there was sexual sin within the church (and even boasting about it or tolerating it), which makes the whole dough (church) unfit for celebrating Christ’s atoning death as a fulfillment of Passover since the church lacked repentance.

- Although Paul clearly believes that the Corinthians are saved and justified because he calls them “unleavened,” their complacent actions (and that of the unrepentant individual) are springing from “the old leaven of malice and wickedness,” that is, their old sinful nature.
- The only proper response is to
 - 1) Stop boasting of their toleration of sin; and,
 - 2) Stop being complacent about sin. Rather, remove / discipline the unrepentant person from their midst like the Jewish people remove leaven from their homes at Passover/The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Notice the reason why the Corinthians are called “unleavened”

- verse 7: “for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”
- The Passover sacrifice of Jesus is the only reason why the Corinthians have clean hearts. The Passover sacrifice of Jesus, the sinless lamb, is the only reason why a believer at Braidwood has a clean heart.
- Jesus has provided complete atonement for all time to all who believe. The Corinthians have already been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, but their boasting is taking them back to Egypt.
- Paul commands the Corinthians to turn back from that treacherous road and to instead clean out the leaven of unrepented sin / boasting and thereby celebrate the festival of Passover correctly.

End: We need to daily do the same.

Why should we cleanse out the old leaven (and be a new lump) ?

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Rom 12: 1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (NIV)

- Believers are a new creation and need to become who we are.
 - Put off the 'old man' and 'put on' Christ in all manner of life, in the knowledge of the Scriptures, with the strength provided by Holy Spirit

What Did the Feast of Unleavened Bread mean in the Hebrew Scriptures?

- A reminder of God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage (in the middle of the night; no time for bread to rise)
- Diligently search one's home for leaven (and remove it)
 - No just the obvious leaven
 - Thorough cleansing / purging of the entire home (serious spring cleaning)

How ought we to regard the feast today?

- Diligently search one's heart for sin, asking Holy Spirit to remove it / cleanse you (put off sin & put on Christ)
- Provides a reminder that a little leaven leavens the whole lump; therefore, we need to be vigilant in examining one's self
 - It is not enough to remove the conspicuous loaves on the table, but take the candle of God's Word and search our lives => every corner, crack, and window sill must be purged on sin (why? Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us)
- Once we have been "born from above", we are new creatures, with a new nature, and new desires; accordingly, Christians should live a new Life of Purity and Separation from Sin (Holiness)

Second of Three Passages in First Corinthians **1 Cor 10:14-22**

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸ Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹ What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²² Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Passover / Lord's Supper

1 Cor 10:14-22

The force of this passage is in identifying that believers are united together in fellowship or a sharing in the blood of Christ and in the body of Christ. The practice of communion is meant to foster an attitude of brotherhood and unity within the community of believers, reminding all that they are spiritual brothers and sisters who have been united with God and each other through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Paul draws out the practical implications for the Corinthians in verses 19 to 22. If participating in “the table of the Lord” means that believers are united with the Lord, then why are they practicing things that make them participants or sharers with demons? The blood of Christ has brought believers into fellowship with the Lord and we are betrothed to Jesus.

Marriage Supper of the Lamb

- We will enjoy a great marriage supper (Revelation 19 verses 6 to 9).

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

- Contrast this with the horrific supper in v. 17-18

¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”

1 Cor 10:14-22 (summary)

- Marriages are exclusive, admitting no foreign relationship. So it is with our relationship with Jesus: he owns our hearts and deserves the total affection of his people.
- Further, “unity in the body of Christ” symbolized by taking the bread and wine excludes union with idols.
- The wedding imagery of Rev. 19 expresses the intimacy, love, and joy between Christ and his people. It fulfills the commitments expressed in
 - Isa. 54:5-8,
 - Hos. 2:19-20, and
 - Eph. 5:26
- The cup and the bread are his reminders to us that we are united with him and no other (as mentioned last week, the Lord’s Supper is a covenant affirmation).

Third of Three Passages in First Corinthians **1 Cor 11:17-34, esp. 23-26**

¹⁷ But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, 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, ¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What! 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.

1 Cor 11:23-26

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, **“This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”**

²⁵ In 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.”** ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Cor 11:27-34

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— ³⁴ if 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.

Implications of 1 Cor 11:17-34

- Regarding the actual practice of the Lord's Supper, we note that in v. 24, just like the celebration of the original Passover was meant to be a memorial (Exo. 12:14), so too is the fulfilled Passover of the Lord's Supper.
- The Lord wants his followers to see the bread of the Lord's Supper as a reminder of him, just as the lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs were reminders of the Exodus. By partaking of the broken bread, we are to remind ourselves of the broken Christ who gave himself for our sins. Any partaking of the bread without remembering the sacrifice of Jesus is an affront to Jesus himself as Paul explains in the verses that follow.

Bitter herbs were a reminder of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt.

Implications of 1 Cor 11:17-34 (con'd)

- Verse 26 reads, “for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”.
- Paul and the early believers expected congregations to celebrate the Lord’s Supper often. We cannot tell how often, but it needs to be part of the life of the church.
- Secondly, the Lord’s Supper is to be an active proclamation – a visible, tangible exclamation of the work of Jesus in the lives and hearts of believers.
- Thirdly, the practice encourages a forward looking hope in the return of the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s supper is not merely about remembering the Lord’s death, but also being eagerly expectant about celebrating the Lord’s Supper “until he comes”.

Concluding Thought on 1 Cor 11

- In this passage, we learn that Paul has heard that the Corinthians' practice of the Lord's Supper has turned into an opportunity for some to overeat while others go hungry and some get drunk. Instead of the Lord's Supper being an opportunity for us fellowship and worship, the church is sinning by disrespecting itself in humiliating the poor among them. It is not at all a supper reflective of the Lord. The Lord's Supper is not the appropriate place for partying and drinking. So, the Corinthians failed to actively proclaim the work of Jesus and failed to hope in his return as a body, eliminating all unity and community and instead bringing judgment upon themselves rather than blessing.
- Today, by the nature of how we experience the Lord's Supper, there is no opportunity for partying and drinking. Nevertheless, the problem with the Corinthians can be the same for us:
 - to use this gathering to fulfil one's own personal appetite rather than to remember the Lord and thank him for his sacrifice. May this be a warning to us as well.

Prayer

- Lord willing, examinations of these 3 passages that rebuked the Corinthians congressional life can act as an encouragement to us.
- Lord, may we learn from their failures and may we strive for a more intimate relationship both with your Son, our Passover, who gave His body and blood for our sins, uniting us into one body for His eternal glory and praise.
- Lord, may you continue to draw us closer to you that we may be more like you. Holy, set apart for your purposes, ever being conformed to your image, for your glory.

Next Week: April 11, 2018

FirstFruits