

**Biblical readings:**

[these all have some OT references attached to them which are explanatory of the background]

**1. Preparation**

[a] Feeding the 5000 – Mark 6.41-42; Mtt 14.19-20; Lk 9.16-17; Jn 6.11-12

[b] Feeding the 4000 – Mark 8.6-8; Matt 15.36-37

[c] John 6.14-26

**2. Accounts of the Institution**

Mark 14.22-26; Mtt 26.26-30; Luke 22.12-20; I Cor 11.23-26

**3. Paul**

I Corinthians 10.16-21; and 11.25-29

**4. Hebrews 13.10-end**

**5. Revelation 5.6**

**1 - “Passover” as used in the New Testament.**

It is helpful always to check that when we have a word we know and see it in a later document, like the NT that its usage is the same as we would take it to mean. Looking at the Greek word Το πασχα , which is normally translated as the Passover, we find it is used in the NT to mean:

[a] a seven day Jewish feast of the Passover

[b] rarely, it means the narrower sense of the actual Passover [held on the night of Nisan 15].

[c] As in the OT it may then be used for the Passover lamb slain at mid-day on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan in the forecourt of the Temple and eaten after sundown.

[d] in Christian usage Easter is called πασχα and figuratively [from the time of Luke 22,15ff] the term can be used for the eschatological banquet” for the Lord’s Supper. [Πασχα Kittel, V, 896ff Jeremias].

**2 – The Feast of the Passover in the NT.**

The OT distinguishes between the Passover, which was celebrated on the night of 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Nisan, and the feast of unleavened bread, held from 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Nisan, in later Judaism the two were popularly combined and this was called the Passover. This is the usage of the NT [See Luke 22.1; Mtt 26.2; Luke 2.41; John 2.13,23; 6.4; 1.55; 12.1; 13.1; 18.39; 19.14; Acts 12.4]. The feast was one of the three pilgrimages [Pentecost and Tabernacles being the other two] and was the high point of the year. As it recalled the deliverance from Egypt it awakened national feelings and hope of the coming redemption. It is shown as a demonstration of the faith of Moses [Hebrews 11.28].

**3 – The Order of things in the Synoptic Gospels [Mtt. Mk. Lk.]**

[1] The Priest’s plot to kill Jesus [Mark 14.1-2; Matt 26.3-5; Luke 22.1-2]

The plot is located as in their minds two days before the Passover and Unleavened bread in Mark. In all cases the record states that they wanted to kill Jesus, but were in a dilemma as to how not to do it during the feast; they feared a riot by the people.

[2] Anointing of Jesus for burial ahead of time [Mark 14.3-9 Matt 26.6-13, Luke 7.36-50 John 12.1-8]

Mark locates this in Bethany, at Simon the leper’s home When the woman anoints him, and there is a debate about wastage, Jesus makes clear that she has

anointed him for burial. Later, of course, after the death of Jesus when the women go to do it at the tomb, there is no time, for He had risen by then.

[3] The Betrayal of Jesus by Judas [Mark 14.10-11, Matt 26 14-16, Luke 22.3-6 Jn 13]

[4] The Preparation for the eating of the Passover [Mk 14.12-17, Mtt 26.17-20, Lk 22.7-14, 6.40; Jn 13.1]

Two disciples, who Luke says are Peter and John, are sent into the city to prepare the room for the Passover of Jesus with his disciples. The need to prepare a room in secret may be the issue of the strange way they are guided to the room. For Jesus to be in Jerusalem at this time whilst such a plot is on his life, it would be opportune to take him before the feast.

[5] Washing the disciple's feet [Matt 10,24,40; Luke 6.40 John 13.1-20]

John of course will make much of this event – and use it to tell us what it is that Jesus is doing as a servant of his people.

[6] In the Upper room, Jesus foretells his betrayal [Mk 14.18-21; Matt 26.21-25; Luke 22.21-23 Psalm 40.10]. The Passover was traditionally eaten standing, but by Jesus' time it was taken reclining [since they were free men and not slaves].

[7] The Last Supper: the Institution of the Lord's Supper Mark 14.22-25, Matt 26.26-29, Luke 22.15-20 Jn 6.51-59, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26].

[8] Rivalry among the disciples over news Jesus will be betrayed

[9] The new commandment of love [Jn 13]

[10] Peter's denial of Jesus is predicted

[11] Jesus to be numbered with transgressors.

[12] Concluding hymn and departure to Mount of Olives.

[13] Gethsemane

[14] Arrest.

#### **4 – The Feast looks back to a past event; that is the setting for its full meaning.**

If we think of some Jewish men going up to Jerusalem as the Law commanded; and their relationship to one another has been that of family and close relationship then Jesus has made the arrangements for the Passover to be eaten together. In that sense he is acting as a master with his disciples, a head of house who has his household around him. In that sense He will eat the Passover with them as any Jew would commemorate the ancient deliverance from Egypt. It is this normal Jewish movement on this night which constitutes the setting.

In another sense, Jesus is the Passover Lamb, and so is the victim to be slain on this night. And this is the clearest focus of the Gospels, they all want us to understand that there will be a death of Jesus and that this death will constitute a new exodus, a new deliverance for them. It is this understanding of the feast that the Gospels see as its true meaning.

The festival commemorates the past event of the Exodus from Egypt. It looks back to something already done. But Jesus is not celebrating the festival – He is the meaning of the festival. He demonstrates that it points to Him. So this will now constitute a new departure – a new Exodus which not only fulfils all that the Lamb foreshadowed then, in the past, but now that the reality has come, there will be a new commemorative direction which Jesus will give.

#### **5 – The meal together.**

The setting of the meal is that of close fellowship, for that is what eating with one another indicates – it is a sharing of life. He shares in the meal as in the feast [for He too dips into the bowl with them]. But if they ate the lamb roasted there is no focus on the lamb itself. All of the focus shifts to an action that Jesus does; and action which [1] forces their attention on to Himself in relation to them, and so [2] onto themselves as the people who will draw their shared life from Him in the eating His body. understood as a lamb whose blood having been shed to turn away the wrath of God now constitutes their food in a redeemed and new life.

In relation to Himself He has made a breaking action, and this is done in a prophetic way as we see in the OT the prophets often did an action which first symbolised the meaning in action and then it was deepened in interpretation. [See Isaiah 20.2; Jeremiah 19.10; 29.10; Ezekiel 4.3; 1 Kings 22.11; Acts 21.14].

There is a reversal of order to the original Passover. In that early situation the shedding of the blood was first done, and the blood put on the doorposts as the family residing there expresses their faith in the promise of God that in the midst of the judgment He would pass over them and preserve their lives. In that sense the blood is the first focus of the Passover lamb, apart from its unblemished state when it was chosen from the flock some days earlier.

### **First, the Bread**

[1] The One for the many.

Jesus gives thanks to the Father, who we know is the source of life for his people and the sender of the Son of God. The breaking of the bread was a distributive act; necessary for each of them to have some. We have already seen that this was a major theme of the Passover lamb’s selection – it must be enough for each person to be able to participate; in fact, that matter alone decided how many Passover lambs were slain that night. After they have taken it Jesus identifies it with his own body. The implication is that they all find themselves as those who draw their life from his body. They are to share in Christ’s self offering and the virtue of his death for them.

It emphasises the work of the one for the many. Just as all of them are partake of the bread; Jesus is focussing the source of their life as arising from his own body.

[2] The many are therefore one.

What this means is that the people of Christ are now constituted as a unified fellowship of people who all draw their life from the one loaf. “Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” 1 Corinthians 10.16-17. The unity of the body of Christ is a oneness based upon the bread of life that they share.

### **Second, the Cup of wine**

The focus now shifts to the “cup of blessing” [1 Cor 10.16]. This is the third cup of wine drunk at the Passover meal. In giving thanks Jesus is acknowledging his Father as the Provider and Initiator of this wonderful salvation.

[1] The One for the many.

Again, the direction of the action is that all drink, and all share. The act of breaking is appropriate to bread, the act of pouring is what is done with wine. Here the pouring is into each cup and they are to understand how to think of this blood.

[2] The many are drawn into covenant.

It is “my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many.”

Now we are to think of the blood poured out but the picture has shifted to that of Exodus 24.8 and Zechariah 9.11. The issue at stake in Exodus is the matter of Lordship of God and the obedience of the people. The blood shed was sprinkled on the people as they responded to the covenant the Lord had brought them under. This “blood of the covenant” was their sharing in the solemn commitment.

In this way the drinking of the cup was to participate in the obedience of response to the new covenant which had come into being in the life, death, resurrection of Christ. This is the new covenant of Jeremiah 31.27-34. That was a covenant unlike the covenant of Exodus 24.6-8 which Israel broke. This covenant looked forward to and incorporated the following matters:

[1] Putting the law of God within the people into the heart

[2] God will be their God

[3] They will be God’s people

[4] Each person will have a personal knowing of God

[5] Forgiveness is central; their sins will not be counted or remembered by God

## **6 – I Corinthians 10 – Entry to idolatry through sharing with demons.**

Look at Numbers 25.1-3

10.1-4 How all of Israel went through the salvation, were baptised into Moses in the cloud and sea and ate the same spiritual food and drink which God provided. In eating the manna and drinking the water they were eating at God’s table. They shared at the table He “spread in the wilderness”.

10.5-11 Yet they became idolaters and acted immorally, tested God and grumbled. So they fell in the wilderness. They are an example for us.

10.12-13 Need to look at our life and take heed that we do not fall. God is faithful, he will not allow that you have any special temptations; only common ones. And He will provide a way of escape, so that the temptation may be born.

10.14-22 Flee idolatry. Run from it. Cannot have the fellowship of God’s table and then have fellowship at the table of demons. Do not attend when people are sacrificing to demons. Do not join them in it.

10.23-33 In the common butcher’s market in a pagan society; eat anything as a creation and provision of the Lord. And join with unbelievers in the common food.

But if people are eating it deeply aware and disturbed that it is sacrificed to idols, do not join them. You will wound their conscience.

## **7- I Corinthians 11.17-34 – Possibility of eating and drinking judgment on ourselves.**

11.17-22 The divisions in the church, where people followed certain men and women and lifted them up as greater than others. [Chapter 1-2]. The inequality of the food preparation for eating together was a shameful thing - there was no sharing. This was a despising of the church of God [ the church of course being the people].

11.23-26 Paul recalls what he received from the Lord about the supper and which he had taught the Corinthians before.

[1] It was on the night he was betrayed

[2] gave thanks, broke and said, “This is my body which is for you”

[3] in the same way [ie with thanksgiving] after supper he took the cup and said, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” This emphasises a meal to eat and a covenant to keep in looking back on the work of Jesus as our true Passover lamb.

[4] Must not eat the bread and cup of the Lord unworthily; for that is to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

[5] Unworthy eating is relational, it has to do with judging the body rightly. Ie not despising the church of God. [in this case being partial and not caring].

[6] The evidence that God has seen this despising is that there are folks who are weak and sick and dying.

[7] It is better that God judges us rather than we be judged along with the world ie to be lost.

[8] When they eat together they need to wait for one another, and not eat for sensual reasons of a good “nosh up” but as eating the body and blood of the Lord.

### **8 – I Corinthians 5 - Christian Life is a continual Passover festival.**

*I Corinthians 5 – Christ is “our Passover”. The Life of the Christian community is pictured as a lump of unleavened dough. This dough is the life appropriate for a continual Passover feast uncorrupted by the malicious, wicked former life dominated by the flesh.*

[1] The immorality of the man living incestuously is pictured as a leaven within the community and they are being encouraged to cleanse out this leaven [unholiness].

Leaven [yeast] is used as an image of working evil, able to multiply and work its way through lives of people [Gal 5.9, Matt 13.13, Lk 13.20-21].

[2] He needs to be “removed from your midst” [verse 2]

[3] Delivered to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so as to preserve his spirit

[4] The basis of the exhortation is that prior to the celebration of the Passover, the old leaven must and can be cleansed away. Just as in the former Passover, these were the instructions of the Lord [Exodus 12] as to how to eat the Passover; they were given to the people as something they must and can do. They are to do this cleansing on the basis that:

[a] they run the risk of the leaven working through the whole lump

[b] they are in fact a new lump by virtue of the work of Christ

[c] Christ is seen as a Passover who has been sacrificed

[d] Now they must keep the feast, which is subsequent to the sacrifice

[5] This views the cross as the place of the sacrifice of a Passover Lamb that begins a new Exodus from a life dominated by the flesh.

[6] The celebration of the feast is not liturgical or ritualistic – there is nothing to be done in that way as an external operation of celebration. The celebration of the feast is the entry into the new life that the Passover lamb has opened up for us through His sacrifice.

In fact, the community is seen as a lump of dough, it is pictured as the unleavened bread itself. This is because the leaven [yeast] is pictured as an old life of the community [old leaven] which is to be cleaned out so that they may be a new lump.

This old leaven is pictured as a past life dominated by the malice and wickedness. The unleavened bread of the feast of life now is that the community is a new lump expressing a life between them and with God as one of sincerity and truth.

[7] The whole of the Christian life is pictured as a Passover feast is to be celebrated continually by the life style of God's people. This life is to be marked by a turning from the old way on the basis that the death of Christ makes this possible. The life uncorrupted by the flesh is the celebration of that sacrifice of Christ Who has taken us by a new exodus into the relationship with Himself and His Father to live sincerely and truly.

[8] The removal of the man implies the community's authority to judge such matters [verse 12] and that the way of "removing the wicked man" [v.13] is not to associate or eat with so called brothers who are immoral, covetous, idolaters, revilers or drunkards or swindlers. All of these ways of life bring disrepute and corruption upon the people of Christ.

## 9 - Summary

1. Prefigured in the Old Testament:

[a] the Passover: Exodus 12.21-28; I Corinthians 5.7-8

[b] Christ the Passover Lamb: I Corinthians 5.6-8

2. The institution of the Supper: Matthew 26.20-30 Luke 22.7-23, I Corinthians 11.17-34

3. The object of it:

[a] it is a remembrance/memorial of Jesus Luke 22.19,

[b] it is a proclamation of the Lord's death within the gathered body until he come I Corinthians 11.26

[c] It is the communion [fellowship] of the body and blood of Christ: I Corinthians 10.14-17

5. To share in the Supper:

[a] It is appropriate to receive both the bread and the wine Matt 26.27, I Cor 11.26

[b] It is important to consider the corporate life together [I Cor 11.20-22]; and each person should examine themselves individually [I Cor 11.28-29] otherwise we invite the corporate judgement [discipline] of the Lord [I Cor 11.30-32].

[c] It is required that we are totally separated to the Lord, we cannot live to other lords [I Cor. 10.18-22]; nor do we share table with them.

[d] We exhort each other to have a godly life toward each other [I Cor 5.7-8]; in this sense, Passover festival is always upon us.