

*Outline in John which acknowledges the Passover as central*

*2.14 1<sup>st</sup> Passover – cleansing of the Temple*

*6.4 2<sup>nd</sup> Passover – bread to eat and feed the multitude*

*11.55 3<sup>rd</sup> Passover –*

*12.1 6 days before the Passover – Lazarus raised*

*13.1-30 Before the Feast of the Passover – Washing feet of disciples*

*18.28 Jesus before Caiaphas; 18.39 release someone before the Passover*

*19.14 The day of preparation – the sixth hour*

## **1 - Eating of bread in the context of flesh and blood.**

We have seen from Passover [Ex 12] and also from the Bread from heaven [Ex 16] that in both cases there was an eating of flesh and bread.

In the Passover, the blood was separated from the animal and was applied [outside the house] for God to see; it had a Godward purpose. It was a turning away of wrath in His judgment; and it was a sign of a faithful household.

Inside the house the emphasis fell on the flesh that was eaten and the unleavened bread accompanied the meal. In the report of the Manna from heaven the emphasis fell on the bread itself and on the flesh of the quails only incidentally. And the use of bird flesh separates our thinking from the Passover Lamb so that we concentrate on the bread while at the same time linking together flesh and bread.

## **2 - The linking together of Passover and bread from heaven.**

In John 6.1-14 we have a record of a sign that Jesus performed [6.14]. Significantly, it was the time for Passover [6.4] and Jesus' premeditated intention to perform the sign is evident in his testing of Philip [6.5-7]. The disciples are drawn into this event as well - they are with Him on the mountain [6.3] and the provision for the crowd can be directed to them [6.5] and they share in the gathering up what is left over [6.12-13] when all have eaten to their fill.

The use of the two fish accompanying the five barley loaves also links together the flesh and bread, but in such a way as to make clear that the emphasis here falls on to the Bread. This is clarified by saying that the people had a satisfying amount of fish [6.11] but the bread was in excess and abundant in its supply. The focus, for the original participants and for the readers, falls on the bread here.

## **3 - A holy meal with a specific and clear purpose.**

All were filled [6.12] and the Lord is clear that nothing may be lost of the bread after it had been used for its purpose. It was dedicated bread to the singular use for which it was given - just as we have found in both cases of the Old Testament - for the Passover lamb was totally eaten and the inability to preserve the manna beyond the day of eating.

## **4 - A specific reference for the disciples of Jesus and their readers.**

The repetition of the Lord "giving thanks" [6.11,23] will make clear to Christian readers that there is something here of the Lord's Supper in their understanding.

## **5 - A salvation experienced by the control of the elements, as in Egypt.**

The people try and make Jesus King by force of their own edict, but He eludes them, withdrawing to a place alone. He will not be a King because the people wish it - He will be a King over them only as they have experienced His salvation. And that is not, right now, for the multitude in the desert, but for the disciples He has chosen, as given by Father.

The disciples set out across the lake. It becomes dark and dangerous [6.17-19] and they are afraid when seeing Him walking on the sea [ie in control over those elements which are dangerous to them]. They welcome Him into their boat and they arrive at their destination. They experience his presence as salvation from their danger [danger from elements that are in His hands] and they arrive at their destination - the parallels with the Exodus are clear for those to see.

## **6 - Food which perishes is transient food, food of immediate gratification. It is not an eternal, lasting food.**

The multitude are really puzzled as to how Jesus arrived there, knowing he didn't go with his disciples, and knowing it was a rough night. The multitude don't experience him as the disciples did, but are puzzled.

Jesus returns them to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, but indicates that they filled their bellies but didn't discern the meaning of the sign that it was [6.26].

They are not to work for the food that perishes - does he mean the manna, which went foul if you tried to store it up? OR everyday food which goes off when you store it, or is destroyed in the eating. Either way, the contrast is with food which endures to eternal life which comes from the Son of Man. [6.27]

The multitude do not follow up the issue of the bread itself, but latch onto the matter of "working" such as is the preoccupation of the men who do not know grace [6.28]. Jesus' answer is to believe on the Son of Man. This is to see the Person as the provision of God.

They look for Him to do a work as a sign that they may believe Him. In this they follow the elders of the slaves in Egypt, who do not know God as YHWH, nor have had the experience of salvation that would have conveyed that knowledge to them. They are unbelievers in this God; that is why they need the sign.

To impress upon Him their need for a sign they mention that their forefathers ate bread in the wilderness and that this bread was given them from heaven.

## **7 - Not Moses [agent] but God Himself [source and origin]: not Israel only but the whole world.**

Jesus makes it clear that

[a] Moses did not give them the bread from heaven but His Father gives the true bread

[b] This bread of heaven = the bread of God [6.33] and it comes down out of heaven and gives life [ie the life of God] to the world. It is not something limited to being a sign within Israel, as the manna was; it is the true bread which has a universal application to the whole world.

They have received bread from Jesus [the sign 6.26] before, now they ask Him to give them this bread [Himself] for all time. This is a commitment of will, at least to desire that of which He is speaking.

## **8 - Jesus as the bread of life.**

He identifies Himself with the bread of life. It is in "coming" to Him and "believing" on Him that people never hunger and thirst. He does not mean that they will not hunger for bread or water in the real bodily sense - He makes this clear by speaking of the bread "of life".

What He is speaking of is that hunger and thirst, the awareness of not being ever satisfied in life, will be dealt with. That is, He is saying that life itself finds its meaning and satisfaction in coming and believing on the Son of Man. Relating to Him this way is life.

## **9 - He must speak of Father [17.3], Who sent Him and draws them.**

But He will have us know that the life which He is, cannot be allowed to be spoken of without the subjection of His own will to the Father being known as the basis of such a life. For the doing of, or the execution of, the will of the Father, is not possible except it be by the obedience and subjection of the Son. [6.38]

The receiving of this life, this bread, has to do with having eternal life [6.40] which comes to mean not coming into judgment [5.24b, 1 Thess 1.10] and of being raised up on the last day [5.29, 6.39-40,44, 11.24]. The living and believing in Christ is the way of such a life [6.40, 11.24-26].

They cannot understand how He can come "down from heaven" and also be Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose parents they know. [6.42] Jesus makes clear the Father has not spoken to them, they have no revelation concerning the Son as yet - there needs to be a drawing by the Father if anyone is to come to the Son [6.44-45].

## **10 - Bread and flesh: Passover and Manna: brought together in One Person.**

Jesus re-iterates that the one who believes Him as eternal life [6.47] and that He Himself is the bread of life. The contrast between the forefathers who ate the manna in the wilderness is that they ate it and then died, this bread may be eaten and one may not die. The bread He gives for the life of the world is his flesh [6.51]. Now we have an equation between bread eaten, and flesh.

This picks up the two themes we have seen connected together in the Passover and also in the manna episode. He is now asking that they think in terms of salvation from [Passover] and salvation to [maintained life - Manna] are seen as coming from the Father through the gift of the One Person provided - Himself.

## **11 - Flesh and blood of Passover: true Food from God: a Person.**

The question "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" is answered by the two themes of Passover night which are brought together - flesh and blood. Jesus is speaking of his death, when his blood shall be separated from the flesh of the body. But He now makes a remarkable implication.

He speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood as true food. The picture of eating, and taking in life, as one takes food into oneself draws us into the Last Supper, when the bread and the wine are seen as the body and the blood of the Lord as that which constitutes new covenant. So here we have the clear reference to his death as the true Passover, out of which eternal life for the eater is purchased.

[a] Previous to this the blood was reserved for the atonement of souls on the altar [Leviticus 17.10-12], it would never be eaten. The blood of the animals used was reserved to signify this clear function of atonement. The "true drink" which gives life to the drinker is the blood of Christ as that which turns away the wrath of God and opens life to those who believe. It is now possible, even required, that blood be drunk now because it is the true drink of which the blood of the animals was simply the sign. Now that the thing signified has arrived, it must be taken into oneself as true drink. It satisfies those who have hungered and thirsted for righteousness.

[b] The true bread comes to mean his body, his flesh. That is, the death of Christ brings as a source of life and a reconciliation between God and man such that the life of God can be entered upon, He may be known in intimacy. This opens the way to the Father through the Son into their shared life, by the Spirit.

## **12 - A mirroring of the life of the Trinity.**

All this taking into oneself of the Son's life by his death cannot be discussed without reference to the Father [6.57-58]. For that it is a shared life so it is so in the Godhead; the Son lives because of the Father who is the living Father Who sent Him. So the one who "eats Me" shall live "because of Me", says Jesus. There is a mirroring of what takes place in the life of God, as there is a Father who has life in Himself and there is One, the Son, who draws life from the Other, so there is in our relation to Christ and those who believe in Him. We draw from his life - which is given for us in his death.

## **13 - Cross and Resurrection: "I will raise him up"**

Salvation from and salvation to are to be found in the death and the resurrection. Both of these are found in the death and life of the one Man. Jesus' promise is that He is the One who will bring the life through His death and the resurrection.

We not only receive life through His death - we also share His risen life and find that this is the eternal life - to have brought into relationship with the father and the Son which Whom is our fellowship [ 1 John 1.5].

1. In our language of the Lord's Supper, we are not surprised to see the images of bread as life, and also as eating the body of the Lord. Such language may sound mystical - but it is not. It is the bringing together of the Passover and the Manna. We must not be embarrassed by such language.
2. To receive a Person, and to eat to do so, is a sign that the Person is taken as life itself [ingested and lived upon as a source of life].
3. Such language and action is language of faith. It expresses our trust in the Person, for Who He is to us, as His people.