

THE FESTIVALS AND THE FEASTS

By F. C. Gilbert

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38).

WHY THE FESTIVALS WERE GIVEN

In order ever to keep the fact before the minds of the Israelites that they were a separated and peculiar people (Ex. 19:5-6) unto the Lord, a people through whom He wished to reveal to the world the Messiah, and the many experiences connected with His life, --- a number of festivals were given to them, which were to be observed at different seasons of the year, and at a specially appointed place (Deut. 16:16). A fast day was also set apart by the Lord (Lev. 16:29-30; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7), which was intended to teach precious truths concerning the work of the Anointed of God.

2. It never was the intention of the Lord that no other people save the Israelites should observe these feasts; everyone could keep them, who would conform to the laws governing the same (Num. 15:15-16). If they did this, however, they would then be as one of them, as one born of the people (Ex. 12:48); and in every respect would constitute similar worshippers of the Lord as were the Israelites.

3. The one feature in all these feasts was to keep before the people the real purpose which God had toward them. If they would see what was intended by these services they would not only be blessed themselves, but others would be brought into the fold, and learn of the great saving plan of God for a lost and sinful world.

THE PASSOVER FEAST; WHEN INTRODUCED

4. The first feast and festival which the Lord instituted was the Passover (Ex. 12:1-11; I Cor. 5:7). This one was not only the first, but perhaps the most sacred of all; and was designed to teach them some of the strongest and most forcible lessons concerning the Messiah.

5. This festival was introduced before the Israelites left their slavery in Egypt (Ex. 12:1; Deut. 16:1); and it was ever to be associated with the thought of their freedom from slavery. Closely connected with this festival, and part of it, was the offering up of sacrifice (Num. 28); in fact this was the basis of all the feasts. If there were no sacrifice or offering, the entire season of its observance would be useless, as far as the real lesson which God intended to teach thereby. (a)

THE PASCHAL LAMB

6. While there were many offerings during the Passover feast (Num. 28:11-25), the special and most prominent of them all was the Passover, or paschal lamb (Ex. 12:3). The first instruction given is found in the twelfth chapter of Exodus; and little in addition was afterward given concerning the offering of other sacrifices (Lev. 23:8; Num. 9:2-3; Deut. 16:1-6). There were at least six prominent things to be remembered in the offering of this lamb, every one of which was to teach some truth concerning Him who is **"the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29).

1. There was to be a lamb for every household (Ex. 12:3-4).
2. This lamb must be without blemish (Ex. 12:5).
3. The lamb must be killed in the evening (Ex. 12:6) (margin, between the evenings), Hebrew, *Ba-an ha-ar-ba-yim*.
4. The blood of the lamb must be sprinkled upon the side posts and upper door-post of the house, in which the lamb must be eaten (Ex. 12:7).
5. The lamb must be eaten the night it was killed; and under no circumstances must any part of it remain till morning; if so, it must not be eaten, but must be burned (Ex. 12:10).
6. Not a single bone of the lamb must be broken (Ex. 12:46).
7. While there are other matters of interest in connection with the paschal lamb, these mentioned are the most prominent, and contain the essence of the truth to be taught.

THE LESSON OF THE PASCHAL LAMB

8. In instituting this service while the people were yet in the land of their slavery, the Lord evidently intended they should learn from this experience the real meaning of freedom from servitude. Concerning their deliverance and the manner it was to be performed, the Lord said: **"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt"** (Ex. 12:12-13).

9. After they sacrificed the lamb, they were to take of its blood and to sprinkle it upon the two places previously mentioned (Ex. 12:7). When the Lord would pass over the land to smite the Egyptians, then the house which He would observe had the blood sprinkled, that house would be freed from death. It made no difference what the man might have thought or believed; it made no distinction with the Lord how many years the person claimed to be an Israelite; nor did it differ how long he had been in Egyptian servitude. Neither did it make any difference to what wing of the twelve tribes he belonged. The one thing necessary for the man of the house, or for the entire people of that house, or for all the people in all the houses of the Israelites, to escape having death in the house that night was to have the *blood* sprinkled in its proper place. Nothing but the blood of the lamb could save a person from death. To do this, however, was efficacious, and brought salvation to the individuals who lived in that house.

DELIVERANCE ONLY THROUGH THE BLOOD

10. It would have been as easy for the Lord to have brought the people from Egypt without having this ordinance performed, if the deliverance were designed merely as a temporal affair, or a deliverance from physical servitude only. But the deliverance of the children of Israel was not alone intended to be a freedom from physical slavery, it was the intention of God to teach the people that Egypt was a synonym of the darkness of sin; their deliverance from Egypt was to be to them a deliverance from the slavishness of sin, since they were set apart as a spiritual people. The only means which God had or has to deliver people from slavery of sin is the blood (Ex.

17:11; Heb. 9:22). This the people must see at the very beginning of their exode. They must recognize that the only way of deliverance from evil was through the blood of the great Lamb, who should sacrifice His life for them and for the world. They should learn their deliverance from spiritual Egypt was fully as great, if not greater, than their deliverance from the physical slavery of the literal Egypt.

SPIRITUAL EGYPT

11. That the Lord intended to use Egypt as a figure, and that there was as real a spiritual Egypt as there was a literal one, is evident from what we read in the Revelation: "**And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord also was crucified**" (Rev. 11:8).

Now it is known that the Lord Jesus was not crucified literally, either in Egypt or Sodom (Luke 23:33); but it is known that these two places were particularly noted for their cruelty and sins, which called down the wrath of God upon them (Ex. 1:13-14; 6:9; Gen. 18:20). It is also true that it was sin which crucified our Lord of glory (I Cor. 15:3); hence these two places are used as illustrations of sin. This was what the Lord wanted the Israelites to learn concerning their deliverance from Egypt.

EVERYTHING FULFILLED IN CHRIST

12. Now *every one* of the laws connected with the lamb and its offering at the Passover, was fulfilled in Christ. This was true with no exception. We will, therefore, now consider their fulfillment in the same numerical order as we considered the distinctive features of the typical lamb.

THE PASSOVER LAMB IS CHRIST

13. 1. The Prophet Isaiah, when speaking of the death of Christ, said: "**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**" Isa. 53:7).

Soon after the baptism of Christ, He was introduced by John the Baptist to the multitudes as follows: "**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh [margin, beareth] away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29). "**And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!**" (John 1:36).

And again, John the beloved says of Him: "**And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb. . .**" (Rev. 5:8). "**And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne. . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain**" (Rev. 5:6).

And that He was directly called, the Lamb, the Passover sacrifice, Paul says: "**For even Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us**" (I Cor. 5:7).

14. 2. Nowhere in the history of the life of Christ can we find where it ever was marred by the least performance of sin. "**Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. . .but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot**" (I Pet. 1:18-19; 2:22).

HE DIED BETWEEN THE EVENINGS

15. 3. The great paschal Lamb, Jesus died at the very hour the Lamb was to be offered, between the evenings; about three o'clock in the afternoon. (b) The Scripture saith He was crucified, beginning at the sixth hour; and at the ninth hour he died (Matt. 27:45-46; Mark 15:33-37; Luke 23:33, 44-46), which was three o'clock, (e) the very time they sacrificed the paschal lamb.

HIS SPRINKLED BLOOD ONLY SAVES

16. 4. Soon after the Apostles began the preaching of the crucified and risen Savior, they told the people everywhere that it was only through the blood which Jesus shed that they could have the forgiveness of sins; because the blood of Jesus only cleanses from all sins (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:14). And Peter, in his first epistle, evidently using the figure spoken of in the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb, says: "**Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ**" (I Pet. 1:2).

Thus we see that the sprinkled blood refers to the sprinkling of the blood of the Son of God which saves and purifies the hearts of men and women (I John 1:7).

CHRIST'S BODY NOT ALLOWED TO REMAIN OVER NIGHT

17. 5. When Christ was crucified, it being on Friday, the sixth day, the preparation day for the Sabbath (Luke 23:54), the Jews came to Pilate and asked that the body of Jesus, and those of the thieves, might not be allowed to remain over the Sabbath as that was a high Sabbath [Hebrew, *Shabbath-Ha-go-dol-the great Sabbath*] day (John 19:31); (d) and it was not allowable to have bodies hanging over night, as this would be defiling to the people, to the Sabbath, as well as to the festival (John 18:28; 19:31). Hence Pilate gave orders to have them taken down, and it was done. Thus we have the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the lamb that it should not be kept over night. Yes, in Christ we find the Scriptures all fulfilled (Luke 24:44).

NOT A BONE IN CHRIST'S BODY BROKEN

18. 6. When the soldiers came to the bodies of the thieves, finding them still alive, they broke their legs, in order to kill them quickly before the sun should set. But when they came to the body of the Savior, supposing that He was not dead, they were ready to treat Him the same as they had done to the thieves. But to their surprise they found Him dead (John 19:33). In order to be certain that all life had departed, they took the sword and pierced His side, whence flowed blood and water (John 19:34). Hence the Scripture was truthfully and literally fulfilled that *not a bone of Him should be broken* (John 19:36). The real lesson of the paschal Lamb was Jesus Christ. Not only as a whole was it fulfilled in Him, but every specification met its completeness in Him, the Lamb of God. Yet strange as it may seem the Jews did not see this. Are there not many at the present time who act as did the ancient people?

THE ORIGINAL COMMANDMENT

19. When the command was given originally to observe the Passover with its ceremonies, it was in substance as follows:

20. In the first month, the month of Abib or Nisan, on the tenth day of the month, they were to take a lamb for every family. If the family were not large enough, more than one family would share in this (Ex. 12:3-4). This number, in the time of Christ, according to the Mishna, must not be less than ten, nor more than twenty. Hence Christ came within the required demand, there being thirteen who sat down to the last Passover supper.

21. This lamb must be kept till the fourteenth day of the month; then between the evenings it must be killed. The night following was to be a gathering of the family, when they were to eat this supper, and when the children were to learn from the father the story of the slavery, and deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 13:6-8; 14-15). In connection with the eating of the lamb, unleavened bread was to be eaten; and for seven consecutive days, beginning with the night of the fourteenth, no leaven of any description must be found in any part of an Israelitish dwelling (Ex. 12:15, 18-29; 13:6-7). In addition to the eating of the unleavened bread the people were to have bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8), which were to remind them of the bitterness of the Egyptian servitude.

22. Then the first and last days of the festival were to be rest days (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:7-8), *Hebrew Sabbaths*, in which no labor was to be performed, save that which was absolutely necessary. These days were not to be observed quite so strictly, from all labor, as was the Sabbath of the Lord, the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

ONLY THE CIRCUMCISED TO EAT OF IT

23. This in detail was the manner which God provided for the observance of the Passover. One thing more it might be well to mention in this connection: No person was allowed to eat of it who was not circumcised (Ex. 12:48). If a man, a stranger, lived in the family, he would either have to be absent from the Passover supper, or if he chose to partake of it, he must be circumcised; then he would be considered as one of the people (Ex. 12:43-49). Not under any consideration was a person allowed to eat the Passover if he were not circumcised. This illustrates why the children of Israel, during their sojourn in the wilderness, partook of only one Passover (Num. 9:1-5). On account of their murmurings against the Lord they were refused admission into the promised land, hence were to die in the wilderness. During the remainder of their thirty-eight years' wandering, not one of their children was circumcised. When they came into the land and were circumcised, then they kept the feast (Josh. 5:2-10).

THE PERVERSION OF THE PASSOVER

24. When the Savior came to earth, instead of finding the Passover as it was originally given, He found it to quite an extent perverted, and the meaning of the service largely lost. True, they kept the Passover festival, but now it had become really Jewish (John 2:13). God gave it as *His Passover* (Ex. 12:11); but they had turned it into an institution largely according to their own liking. True, the basis of the festival, the offering of the lamb, they still observed, but so much had been added, and so many burdens at that, that it was really a heavy load to the people. As the Jews observe it at the present day, it is very nearly the same as it was kept in the days of the Savior; hence we will give a description of the Passover as it is now observed, which also will shed some light on a few passages of Scripture in this connection.

THE REMOVING OF THE LEAVEN

25. On the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, the master of the house with one of his boys, generally the youngest, searches the house for leaven. (e) Some time earlier in the day small

pieces of bread are scattered in different rooms and halls of the house, wherever leaven of any kind has been used during the year. In the evening the man of the house generally takes a lighted candle, and goes in search of the leaven. The son carries the candle, while the parent has a feather and a wooden spoon. Each place or corner is very carefully scrutinized, and every piece is gathered up with great precision, so that not a particle of leaven may be left anywhere in the house. Before this is done all work and study must be put aside, and necessary preparations made. When this is finished the pieces of leaven are securely tied, and placed somewhere in an unused part of the house; they are removed the next morning about ten, and burned. This is known as "removing" or "purging" the leaven. It is very punctiliously observed, and great care is taken that not one particle of the leaven remains.

26. No doubt this was what Paul had in mind, when in writing to the Corinthian church upon the subject of the Passover, He said: "**Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump**" (I Cor. 5:7).

Just previous to this search the following prayer is offered: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hath sanctified us with His commandments, and hath commanded us to remove the leaven." Then the following is said after the search has been made: "All manner of leaven that is in my possession which I have not seen nor removed, shall be null and accounted as the dust of the earth." After the leaven has been burned the next morning, the following is said: "All manner of leaven that is in my possession, which I have seen and which I have not seen, which I have removed and which I have not removed, shall be null and accounted as the dust of the earth."

The reason no doubt why in this latter saying these words are inserted, "which I have not seen," "and which I have not removed," is because of the possibility of a mouse having carried in during the night some piece or pieces of leaven and secreted them where the master has not observed them. Should this really be so, the house would have to be searched again. But by inserting this statement, the leaven in the house is null and void, and the man can feel he has a clear conscience. This reminds one of what the Savior said concerning the straining at gnats. After the leaven is burned, food and dishes of every description in the house used during the year must be hid from view.

PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER

27. On the night of the fourteenth day the Passover proper begins. It is then that the Passover supper is observed. Not now having any lamb, substitutes are used in the form of a roasted egg, boiled hard, and the shankbone of a lamb. In addition they use celery, parsley, lettuce, and horseradish for bitter herbs, and a mixture called haroseth, a sort of sauce, to represent the mortar of which the brick was made when the ancestry were in Egypt. See illustration.

28. The table is always prepared before the evening, so that when the people return from the synagogue service they are ready to sit down to supper. This no doubt is the reason why the disciples inquired where they should go and *prepare* the Passover (Matt. 26:17).

EACH PERSON MUST HAVE FOUR CUPS OF WINE

29. Soon after the family is gathered around the board the man of the house will take a glass of wine, over which a blessing is pronounced. Each person at the table also has a glass at the same time. This wine is made of raisins. It is absolutely necessary to have this wine at the Passover. In

fact the importance attached to it is so great that the rabbis taught that if a person had no wine for the feast he must sell or pawn some of his goods and secure it. Or if he had nothing to dispose of, he must secure it from the poverty fund kept for the poor on just such occasions.

30. Not only must they have wine, but they must have sufficient that each member of the family shall have four cups. This is what the rabbis taught even in the time of Christ: "On the eve of any Passover it is not lawful for a person to eat anything from the time of the afternoon prayer till after dusk. Even the meanest in Israel shall not eat until they have arranged themselves in proper order at ease around the table nor shall a person have less than *four cups of wine*, even if they must be given him from the funds devoted to the charitable support of the very poor."---*Tract "Pesachim."*

And the Talmud in elaborating upon this subject, says: "All persons, whether men or women, are obligated on this night to drink four cups of wine, and this number is not to be diminished."---*Laws of Leaven."*

And again: "Whosoever has not got wine transgresses a command of the rabbis, for they have said, that there is to be no diminution from the four cups. And it is necessary to sell what he has in order to keep the command of the wise men. He is not to depend upon the bread, for if he fulfill the command concerning one cup, he has not fulfilled that respecting the three. Therefore let him sell what he has, and furnish the expense, until he procure wine or raisins."---*"Ways of Life."*

We can appreciate more what the Savior evidently meant when He said that the Pharisees and scribes laid heavy burdens upon the poor people; too heavy for many of them to bear (Matt. 23:4).

THE SAVIOR TEACHING THE DISCIPLES PRECIOUS LESSONS

31. Thus when the Savior came to sit down to the last Passover with His disciples He found many things not commanded in the Word of God, which of themselves were valueless, even though the rabbis did attach much meaning to them. Yet He could not let the opportunity slip by without teaching them some valuable lesson even from these traditions.

32. These four cups were in existence in the days of the Savior; and during this last Passover service he instituted that beautiful, precious, and helpful reminder of His death and crucifixion.

THE ORDER OF THE SERVICE

33. When the first cup of wine is drank a blessing is pronounced, called the "blessing of the festival." Part of this wine is left in the cup. When this is finished, all the persons at the table are obligated to wash their hands. It was no doubt at this stage of the supper that the ranklings in the hearts of the disciples were manifest, and the bitter strife arose who should be the greatest (Luke 22:24-27). The Savior then laid aside His garment, took the towel, and washed their feet (John 13:4-5).

34. The next thing in order is to take some celery or parsley and dip it in salted water, and pass around to each person. This is a sort of preparation for the bitter herbs to follow later. Then the middle cake of unleavened bread is broken. At the present time there are three special Passover cakes used, the middle ones of which is broken at this period. It is claimed by some that this was

observed in the days of Christ, and much significance is attached to this part of the service. If it be so, we can learn several beautiful lessons therefrom.

THE HIDDEN MANNA

35. It is said that these three cakes represent the three persons of the deity, Father, Son, Holy Ghost. The middle person of the Deity is claimed by the rabbis even, to be the "Mam-re," the Word, the Son of God. (g) The breaking of the middle cake represents the breaking of the Son of God, the Messiah. When this custom was adopted, is not generally known, but thus it exists today. After the cake is broken in two, one part is hid under a pillow on the couch, the other part is used at the supper. This part that is hidden is called *Aphiko-mon*, meaning *manna secreted or hidden*. After a time this is brought forth, and a small portion is given to each of the persons around the table. This would very naturally suggest a forcible thought upon that text in Revelation: **"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna"** (Rev. 2:17).

This hidden piece of cake is very precious to the man of the house, and he guards it with great jealousy. So the "Hidden Manna" is very precious to every one of God's dear children, and He should be regarded with great desire.

THE DIPPING OF THE SOP

36. After the cake is broken, the service proper takes place. The history of the exode is then discoursed upon, and the wonderful dealings of God with His people and with the Egyptians are all gone over. Then the supper proper takes place. During this supper the bitter herbs, in the form of horseradish, are served to every member of the family. One form of this herb is served between two pieces of unleavened bread, then dipped in the sauce previously mentioned. To this evidently Jesus referred, after he had said, "One of you shall betray Me," when he remarked: **"He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it"** (John 13:26).

THE CUP OF BLESSING, AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

37. After this part of the service came the cup of wine, known as the "cup of blessing." It was during this part of the supper that the Lord spoke of the bread and the wine, as emblems of His shed blood, and broken body (Luke 22:19-20).

He instituted that blessed and precious memorial of the Lord's Supper for the church, by which they were to keep Him in mind, till He should come again. This new memorial of the Savior, a pledge that He would come again, was to be rewarded again, was to be regarded by the church as a season of joy, blessing, and appreciation of the great gift of the Lord Jesus, who gave His life a willing sacrifice.

Judas did not stay with the Savior and disciples till the end; and after He went out, the Lord gave the disciples still further instructions (John 14-17).

38. After this cup was finished and the bread distributed the "Hallel" was sung, which also explains the expression that after they had sung a hymn (margin, psalm) they went out (Matt. 16:10, margin). The "Hallel" consisted of a number of Psalms (Ps. 115-118).
(h)

39. Thus the Savior took the very traditions they had inaugurated, which were in a large degree foreign to the original Passover, and made a most beautiful and sacred institution by which to remember Him in the church, till He come.

TWO DAYS OBSERVED INSTEAD OF ONE

40. Instead of the people keeping the first and last days (Ex. 12:16) of the feast as a sabbath, they observe two days in each case. This addition was of the scribes and Pharisees. The following will explain itself: "Although the second holy day is only of the words of the scribes, everything that is forbidden on the first day is forbidden on it[the second day] also. And every one who professes the second holy day, but by some means violates it, is to receive the beating denounced against rebellion, or to be excommunicated, except he be a learned man."--- *The Laws of the Festivals*.

41. Thus we see why the Savior said that they placed heavy burdens upon the multitudes, but they themselves would not lift them with their small finger. Because these men were learned, they considered themselves exempt.

THE TRUE PASSOVER

42. But the true Passover, and all its meaning, is to be found in Jesus Christ only. He is the Passover (I Cor. 5:7); and we are to eat Him with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. 5:8). This is the meaning of the unleavened bread; this is the meaning of the Passover. It was a longing desire on the part of the Savior to eat the Passover with the disciples before He suffered, for then these traditions and burdens would be removed from them, and they would know in all its fullness the meaning of the Passover.

43. If the church of Christ of today could only see that instead of the observance of many of the festivals which are being observed as memorials, whether they be Easter, or Christmas, or some other day, which is similar in effect to the traditions of the Jewish rabbis, they would be more obedient to His will, they would then enjoy much more of Jesus Christ, the great Lamb of God, and have a continuous feast in Him who is the great and blessed Passover.