

IN CHRIST THERE IS ONE PASSOVER

Maundy Thursday

It was Passover night, a night unlike any other. The first one took place in Egypt some twelve centuries before the celebration with Jesus and his disciples. It was a celebration on the run. It would define the meaning of fast food for ages to come. Its feast would be consumed by a nation of slaves destined to break free of its Egyptian yoke. Israel that slave nation would leave behind its bondage leaving behind death and destruction as signs of Egypt's sin against Yahweh, the God who is.

For generations thereafter, Israel, once a slave nation would remember the price of its freedom from bondage and sin. The people have re-lived that night each year since and it is written they will keep it forever.

To help them remember the people of Israel would use the signs of their spiritual marriage with their God. The signs of its freedom would be the Passover meal: a lamb slaughtered, roasted, and then eaten. The signs of its freedom would be the blood of that slaughtered lamb marking the doorway into each home. And each family would remember that they had taken the greatest sign of all, its firstborn child. That child would be a symbol of their freedom and salvation. And for we Christians that child would be a sign of Jesus the Messiah, the firstborn from the dead, whose broken body and shed blood on the cross, would become the eternal "*Passover*" as *God took upon Himself the afflictions and death produced by men.*

The blood on a doorway would connect the death of its past life to the birth of its new life. A whole people stepped through that bloody door and their life was changed forever.

Demonstrating the outward signs every year is the re-living of that Passover, reinforcing what their fate might have been. The eating, the running, the bitter taste of slavery and death in their mouth all would make them remember. The Exodus story reminds the people of God they died to their past, ran from it, to a new future with God.

Forgetting our history is dangerous and painful. That history will find us and potentially, bring us back to that awful place of sin and slavery again.

Jesus Christ led his disciples through the Passover and made it new in their memories. In Him there is one Passover. As Christians we make the Passover meal our own story for it is irrevocably connected to the Last Supper instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the people who will be made free are those who confess their sin over the Lamb of God, Jesus His Son.

Jesus would shed his blood on the posts of another doorway – the doorway of the cross. The cross is the portal through which the power of death is neutralized and transformed. That bloody cross forever reminds the Christian that Jesus hung between heaven and earth for a Passover where the sins of the world are ultimately overcome. The matzoh or bread of affliction his disciples ate would be transformed into the body of Christ broken for the world. The cup of wine or blood of Jesus would become the shed blood of the Lamb of God a sign upon our hearts.

Jesus took the Jewish Passover that Thursday night, renewed and reshaped it once again in the hearts of his disciples. On that night 1200 years after the first Passover celebration he would become the lamb of sacrifice. He would not eat or drink of that sacrifice. He would become that sacrifice and that lamb of the new Passover. He waited. His day of celebration will come when his kingdom is one day realized. I want to sit at that table when the Marriage Supper will replace the Passover. And though it may take an eternity in our minds I can see the Lord Jesus take his towel again and wash our feet. The towel and water will remain with us forever.

This sign of servant hood demonstrates his love for his disciples, his love for the world on the cross and the sign of our love for one another.

Taking water and washing each one of his disciples made them his intimate friends. It would not be enough to break bread, eat and drink. They had done all that before. The act of cleaning the soles of the feet of each one transformed that Passover into the ultimate form of hospitality and grace. It was an act of utter humility, self-emptying and pouring out of one's life for another. In this way Jesus followers would take up their own cross.

Jesus took this outward sign as his own way of telling his disciples that he was about to become a sign of humiliation at the cross. This sign would become for them an act of his love.

“Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.” Christian remember that the sacrifice of God's lamb was given in that Last Supper. As Jesus loved his disciples during his life he would love them more after his death. That love lives beyond the flesh seeking the souls of all men.

Tonight with the ancient people of Israel and the ancient Church we dare to remember and be united in Jesus death, the Lamb of God. His Passover set us free and that freedom is the condition for true love. AMEN