

EXAMINE THE SELF FOR PASSOVER !

In just a short while we will be sitting down with a very select few people on this earth to partake of the Passover. The Passover memorial of the death of Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the world. We will be partaking of the symbols of His broken body and shed blood, which means that we have been selected to know and understand God's purpose for us. Being chosen as one of the elect to know God's truth carries sobering responsibilities, so we cannot approach this event lightly.

The Passover is the first event beginning again God's annual season of Holy Days, which reveal His plan of salvation for us and for the whole world. This plan hidden from the world in general, reveals why we cannot take this event lightly. This plan reveals that you and I have been called to know and understand God's purpose ahead of the majority of mankind. Jesus said: in Matt 13:11, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries, of the Kingdom of Heaven but to them it is not given." The world is not being called now! Only the elect are being called at this time.

God's Holy Days, revolve around the harvest seasons in Palestine, which shows that we are part of the early harvest, representing the elect first fruits. The rest of the world will not be given their opportunity until Jesus, the Christ returns and the millennium begins in the late fall harvest. We read of that in Leviticus 23.

The sobering truth is, we have been given a special calling at this time, to qualify ahead of the world, so we can be used by God and Christ, to help bring knowledge and salvation to the rest of mankind.

God is vitally concerned with us as we

approach this Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, because of our important part in His plan. He is deeply concerned with our attitude. He wants to know if we are totally surrendered to Him.

Now is the time, just before the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread to examine ourselves to see whether we are truly right with God and in harmony with Him and His plan for us. God inspired the Apostle Paul to write "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor 11: verses 27-29). This warning would not be in God's word if there were not mortal danger for us.

This coming Passover is a vital time whether you have taken the Passover many times or if this is your first time. What does it mean to discern the Lord's body? How can we eat and drink unworthily? How can we eat and drink damnation to ourselves? We need to understand! God wants us to isolate a very basic and elementary perspective each year at the Passover. He wants us to focus on that elementary concept, as we begin again to relive His plan of salvation for mankind. That elementary concept is salvation. That's what His plan is all about, whether it relates to us, or the world.

Therefore, the Passover is a time for us to once again get down to the elementary precepts of our own salvation, our own relationship to God and His work we are called to do. It is a time to examine ourselves

a time to look more deeply at ourselves.

We can get so absorbed in our personal lives we lose sight of the “deeper things,” God has for us to do for Him. We have to get and keep ourselves right with God, that's what the Passover is all about.

There is never a time we can allow ourselves to get so busy or so important in our own eyes, that we no longer need to get deadly serious about the elementary concepts of salvation, that we so intimately associated with the Passover. No matter how long we have been in God's church or how spiritual we have become, we are still human beings with human nature. Not one of us will ever come to a place in this life when we can afford to forget what we are.

This year just before the Passover, we should take another look, a long, good look! At what man is like? Jer.17:9, tells us, “The heart [of man] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked who can know it?” Rom 8:7, the New Testament states: “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” This is the kind of nature all human beings have and this is the time of year to especially remember that fact. It is also a time to rehearse and reaffirm what we have done with the knowledge that we have with that kind of nature.

The truth of the matter is, human nature is alien to God and to His ways. Man's heart is wicked, and is deceitful, totally opposed to the ways of God. Most have never seen themselves that way. Most of mankind does not have the slightest awareness they have this kind of nature.

Satan, in hiding this truth from human beings, has done his work well! Not only is man's nature this way, but his environment is virtually totally alien to God. Mankind does not recognize that this world is not God's world, yet God is allowing Satan to rule this world for a time. God is allowing Satan to seduce man through man's mind and fleshly pulls, to want to imbibe of all the evil things of this world.

We are blessed to know Satan is the present ruler of this world and he is blinding men's minds to the truth that we have been given the privilege to understand: Notice 2 Cor. 4:3-4, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” I John 2:16. Adds to that, “For all that is in the

world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is. Not of the Father, but is of the World.”

So, in our Passover examination, let's realize what kind of basic nature we have and what kind of a world we live in. For us, who are the elect, light and understanding has come by God's calling and giving us of His Holy Spirit. Through God's infinite mercy, we were called as one of His elect, to see ourself and our environment as they really are! This is a blessed miracle in our life! God sent His Holy Spirit to open our mind to His real knowledge. He opened our mind to see our self! We were led to see what human nature was like and we were led to see how Satan has influenced us along with, all mankind. We didn't like what we saw! We want to be different, so we came to repentance. Making a change in ourselves, because that's what repentance is.

The words of the Apostle Paul became our words: “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hated that do I.” Vs 18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: Vs 24, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:15, 18, 24).

So like Paul you and I came to repentance and were baptized. We went through an outward symbol of death. Baptism is a picture of death, burial and resurrection. You were immersed in a watery grave and brought up in a type of a resurrection. But a resurrection to what? Rom 6: 2 - 4, will answer that for us! “God forbid. how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Having now seen ourselves for what we really were, we wanted to stop being God's enemy. We wanted to stop being deceitful and wicked. We wanted to have all the past evil deeds and thoughts taken away. We wanted to become a new different person. We saw that Jesus, the Christ died for us and we saw why, He had to die! It was to pay the price for our sins and for our hostile mind. So we acknowledged Christ as our own personal Savior.

We asked God to accept the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ life for our sins and carnal mind. We openly

before God showed Him by our baptism, what we truly wanted our evil carnality to die and to be changed into the kind of nature that is no longer God's enemy. When God saw this genuine, heartfelt attitude, He put His Holy Spirit within us and begot us as His own child. "But that isn't the end of the story!

Now began what is perhaps the hardest part of all for every one of us. Having crucified in a sense the 'old nature,' we each soon found that the old nature wasn't dead yet. Though we wished for it to be destroyed, we found it still had life and vigor and that's just God's point! God intended it this way for a vital purpose.

God wants us to comprehend the real depth of the evil, wickedness and deceitfulness that is in us. God is allowing us to live on with our fleshly natures and in an alien environment to teach us how really and profoundly evil we have been and how often we still fall short. Rom. 6. 6 states, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

We know that once we are resurrected or changed at our Lord's return, we will be freed from this kind of nature according to verse 7 of Romans 6: "But, until that time comes, we must reckon ourselves to be dead: indeed unto sin, and living the righteous life." Verse 11 claims, "Likewise you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11).

The struggle then begins. In verse 12 we read, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof."

When we are first baptized, we are called "babes" in Christ. Not with standing the fact that we have come to miraculous and profound knowledge at baptism, we still are just beginning a new life of overcoming. We need to grow and mature in understanding and perspective. As newborn babes, we are told in I Peter 2: 2, "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." 1 Cor 11: verses 27-29, We are given more advise, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

As we grow in a deeper and more profound knowledge of spiritual thing, our ability to see ourselves becomes more acute. We see things about ourselves and our natures that we never saw at baptism. This is progress! It is what God intended.

When Paul received God's Holy Spirit and began to grow spiritually, he found that his more profound knowledge of God's spiritual law made sin appear to become exceeding sinful according to Rom 7:13. And so it is with us. The longer we live with ourselves in this flesh the more our knowledge of God's perfect spiritual law, that we are privileged to understand, convicts us of the exceeding sinfulness of the carnal human nature. So, as we approach the Passover we have had one more year to live with ourselves, with our human nature. God is now asking us once again to partake of the broken body and shed blood of Christ.

Ask ? Has this past year convinced you that you have come to the place that you no longer need the sacrifice of Christ? Or rather has it convinced you that you need it even more profoundly than ever before? This is all included in discerning the Lord's body. Certainly you have grown in personal overcoming of sin and certainly you have grown in Bible understanding and spiritual knowledge.

But, have we grown personally, knowing we need Jesus, the Christ more than ever before? And have we grown in completely trusting Him, whether for healing by means of His broken body, or for salvation through the value of His blood that once coursed through His body? Or in any kind of day-to-day need in which He is your advocate to intervene on your behalf? Are you ready to partake of the Passover?

Each year God commands us to live through again His Holy Days, which picture His plan of salvation for the world. Each year we begin again the primary beginning of the Passover and the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Christ! Each year we should be observing God's Holy Days with greater desire for the fulfillment of His plan because we should have seen the need for it more than ever before, for ourselves and for the world.

As we start the Holy Days again, it should be with a renewed eagerness. It should be with a more fervent desire to take those precious symbols because we know far more deeply their meaning to us. It should not be with a humdrum routines approach that we begin each Gregorian new year.

We cannot come up to these Holy Days with a half hearted, apathetic approach. If we do we may eat and drink "unworthily" and eat and drink damnation unto ourselves! No one is "worthy." A "worthy"

person totally understanding how unworthy they are of Christ's great sacrifice!

That's what makes us ready to partake of the Passover with full understanding. This is the only way we can partake of it worthily, that is, in a worthy manner and attitude! God wants His called to approach the Passover with the most earnest and heartfelt desire. No other attitude demonstrates a true called out one who has grown as he should through the year. So are you ready to take the Passover? No man who has lived another year in the flesh with the presence of the Holy Spirit, can approach the Passover without a deeper and more sincere need for the sacrifice of Christ.

No man can thus take the unleavened bread of Jesus broken body and the red wine of His shed blood without in Spirit, falling at the foot of the stake, before Jesus bleeding dying body and say, "for me, for me, Oh God, He died!"

At the last supper Christ "Took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20). These words should be more living and personal for us than ever before! **Are they?**

Having seen the profound need for the sacrifice of Jesus, the Christ in our personal lives, we should have a deeper and more acute desire for the same light and understanding to come to this lost, sin-sick world, not just in theory, but in fact.

The Passover, picturing God's plan of salvation for the world is not just a personal salvation for us alone. There are a lot of human lives being lost all around us. The utter hopelessness of a dying civilization sends its groaning up into our consciousness everyday. We, who have been given the knowledge of the only way out for the world, ought to groan within ourselves for the time they too can be delivered from the bondage of corruption of which we have made so acutely aware.

Each new year of Holy Day observances should be from a higher level of awareness, with a greater sense of earnestness for their fulfillment. There is only one work truly working toward that end time. That work is found in the scattered Churches of God! And we are a part of it with them!

Has this past year brought you to a deeper

dedication? Are you, behind' God's work with your very lives? And all that your lives can produce? Or, are the annual Holy Days to you just another humdrum routine again? Forgetting John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him. Should not perish, but have Everlasting life." Observe verse 18, "He that believeth on Him [in His purpose] is, not condemned: but he that believeth not [in His purpose] is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

If we truly believe in God's purpose through Jesus the Christ and are going all out for that purpose in our life, then we are properly discerning the Lord's body and are eating and drinking eternal life unto our self. But if our life and actions show a halfhearted lethargic support and dedication to God, we are eating and drinking damnation to our self, not discerning, not understanding the full meaning of, the Lord's body.

Examining our self make it personal!

There is still "time to examine our self and make this Passover a personal thing between you and God. Look deeply into your life **and ask?** Have I just been coasting? Am I going to let this just be another routine Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread ?

If this is true, then one desperately, need the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ for the lethargy which God's Holy Spirit has led you to see in your self, just as you should have been led to see many other things about ones self this past year. For every growing called out one each Passover should be a more profound experience in which our Savior and our God grows more personal, and more precious each day! Will you be ready? Together we will refresh what our Lord did for us. Starting with verse 4 and 5 of John 13, we find during supper that Passover evening Jesus rose and girded Himself with a towel. In verse 6, Peter impulsive and naive, did not want to let Jesus "stoop" to washing his feet. Jesus said to him, "if I wash you not you have no part with Me." Peter of course did indeed want to have a part with Christ and he consented. Jesus then "After He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, And was set down again, He said unto them, know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as

I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than His Lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that sent Him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.” (John 13:12 - 17).

At the Passover we will wash one another feet. But again, it is a outward symbol of an attitude and action in our lives, one of serving the brethren and being willing to give ourselves in humility for the purposes of God. Do you have a part with Christ? Are you in a foot washing attitude all year? That's what the outward symbol of foot-washing you will be partaking of truly means.

Are you discerning the Lord's body? Or perhaps like Peter, not wanting to let the purposes of God be to take the form of a servant. A growing discerning Christian, knows his God has called him to humble himself as a servant of brethren and mankind. So, the time is now! The Passover is just weeks away. You have had another year to live, and experience and grow. The panorama of our life is there before us, along with the table of the sacrifice of Christ.

In Isa. 53:3-5, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and Acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”

James Russell