

VII—THE PASSOVER OF THE FIRST-BORNS

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A MEMORIAL of first rank with the Israelites is the Passover. It celebrates one of the most momentous chapters in their history. It stands at the beginning of their ecclesiastical year, as the Day of Atonement stands near the beginning of their civil year. It is associated with their national birth. The Scriptures declare that God at that particular time had brought to the throne of Egypt a Pharaoh of indomitable will. The Scriptures declare that whereas other persons might have been in line for the throne, God specially favored this man's attaining it in order that through his natural stiffneckedness and obstinacy Divine power might be manifested in one after another of the plagues which his course would make necessary and proper. We read, "For this very purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show forth my power in thee." (Ex. 9:16.) The ten plagues sent upon the Egyptians were manifestations of Divine Justice in opposition to their unjust treatment of God's Chosen People. The last of the ten stands related to our subject, The Passover.

The edict sent forth was that all of the first-born of the Egyptians should die, and that the first-born of the Israelites should not die. And the Chosen People residing in Egypt were directed to take special steps whereby to mark themselves as separate and distinct from the Egyptians. They were to take for each family a lamb without blemish and bring it into the house on the tenth day of the first month. They were to cherish it and care for it until the fourteenth day, and then to slay it. Its blood was to be sprinkled on the outside doorpost and lintels while its flesh was to be roasted in the fire without a bone of it being broken. It was to be eaten in the night of the fourteenth with bitter herbs and with unleavened bread. On the morrow, in the strength of this food, they were to march forth out of Egypt to go to the Land of Promise for an inheritance under the Covenant made with Abraham.

The Destroying Angel Passed Over.

The results were as the Lord by the mouth of Moses had foretold. The first-borns of the Egyptians died in that night, but the first-borns of the Chosen People were passed over or spared. This notable

miracle was memorialized by Divine direction, and every year at the appropriate season a lamb was taken on the tenth day into each of the houses of the Israelites, one for each family or group. All leaven was put away from their dwellings. Everything representing corruption was burned, and unleavened bread alone was eaten with the lamb. The annual celebration of the Passover was for eight days, the first and the eighth day being high days, or to be specially commemorated. On the occasion of our recent visit to Jerusalem we gauged the time so as to be present in Jerusalem at the Passover season, knowing that it is not only the oldest Jewish institution, but the most joyous festival of the Chosen People. It celebrates one of the earliest manifestations of Divine favor toward them, and reminds them of the prophecies which declare that at some future time God will manifest himself in their favor still more markedly; as it is written, "It shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth that brought up the Children of Israel from the land of the North, and from all the lands whither he had driven them." (Jer. 16:14,15.) Again, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my Covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:31,32.) The intimation here again is that this deliverance from Egypt at the Passover time, the most notable event in the past history of the Chosen People, will be cast entirely into the shade when the due time shall come for establishing with Israel the New Covenant—old in respect to the Law and the Divine requirements, but new in the sense that it will be based upon better sacrifices and have a better Mediator, able to do for Israel exceedingly better things than Moses, the Mediator of the Sinai Covenant, was able to accomplish—noble as he was in his every endeavor to serve the people as their Mediator. It is of this better Mediator and the better Covenant which he would accomplish for them that Moses spoke, saying, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me (but greater—antitypical of me); him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."—Acts 3:22,23; Deut. 18:15.

The Passover at Jerusalem.

On the eve of the Passover, every Jewish family was in preparation for it. As the tenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar had passed before our arrival, we did not witness the selection of the lambs for the families. The lambs had already been taken into the homes. We were in time, however, to note the various preparations for the feast. Each householder cleaned house for the occasion and searched every nook and corner for old bones or anything decaying and malodorous, and everything of food containing any corruption; and all such refuse was burned. Not only so, but after the actual cleansing had taken place a ritualistic or formal procedure was practiced. The head of the family, with a lighted candle, followed by the members of the household, made an inspection of the entire house.

The killing and roasting of the lamb was quite a procedure. A stick was run through the entire length of the animal and also another stick crosswise, was used by some, thus *unintentionally* giving the suggestion of a cross, for nothing is at present further from the minds of the Chosen People than that their lamb represents Jesus, the Crucified One.

The family gathered around the common dish, and while many now use knives and forks and spoons, others of the people seem to preserve the custom of early times and use their fingers to a considerable extent. Some had the modern matzos, but very many appeared to use the old style of unleavened bread, which more resembles thick pancakes. These are rather tough and pliable. One of them bent in the fingers serves fairly well as a spoon, which is consumed in the usage, sometimes being saturated in the juices for a specially tasty bite. The eating is supposed to be done in the manner to remind one of the original occasion, when the Israelites ate with their outer garments on, ready for immediate departure for the Land of Promise. In every family the householder, as directed by Moses, explained to the family the meaning of the feast—its origin as connected with the beginning of the Jewish national life. This eating of the lamb, according to the Law belonged to the fourteenth day of the first month. Following it on the fifteenth day began the festival of rejoicing celebrating the grand deliverance from the power of Pharaoh and the Red Sea. It was not our privilege to continue in Jerusalem for the eight days. But the

first great day of the feast certainly saw the Holy City at the time of its greatest exhilaration.

Not only was the occasion one of special interest to the Jews who constituted a majority of the population, but likewise it was a time of general prayer and holiday with the Greek and Armenian Christians and the Mohammedans who together constitute a considerable proportion of the population. The old Christian communions still celebrate the date of our Lord's death and resurrection, after the manner of the early church, according to the Jewish style of calculation, from which the Roman Catholic and daughter systems slightly departed long centuries ago. This accounts for the fact that this year the Roman Catholics, Episcopalians and Lutheran Churches celebrated Good Friday and Easter Sunday—March 25-27—while the celebration which we witnessed was a month later, April 22-24. We therefore had the pleasure of noting the Greek and Armenian celebration of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

The Meaning and Interpretation.

For thirty-five centuries God's Chosen People, obedient to the Divine Direction, have celebrated the memorial "Passover," seeing merely its outward signification and not for a moment realizing the true significance of the grand fact which they celebrate—that it typified a grand feature of the Divine Program of great value to them and to all mankind. The lamb they slew typified "the Lamb of God," Jesus, whose death constitutes the Ransom-Price for the sins of the whole world. His death was necessary before the promise to Abraham and through him to the Chosen People could possibly have fulfillment. A redemption from sin, to be everlastingly efficacious, must be based upon a better sacrifice than the literal lamb repeated annually. It was not only necessary that Jesus become a man in order to give his life a sacrifice for mankind (Adam and his race), but it was necessary, additionally, that having finished the sacrificing work he should ascend up on High to Jehovah's right hand, to be the Spiritual Messiah, who in due time will accomplish for the Chosen people all the gracious promises made to them in the Covenant with Abraham, in which they trust, and in harmony with which they will be used of the Lord in conveying His blessings to all nations, peoples and tongues. A sin-condemnation was on the world—"The wages of sin

is death.” Man’s penalty must be met before this condemnation of death could be fully and forever set aside—before man could be entirely and forever lifted out of death conditions back to eternal life and into harmony with his Creator.

In harmony with the Divine arrangement, Jesus first offered himself to Israel as their King. But Israel saw not how he could be their Messiah, because he had neither wealth nor armies nor influential friends: they disdained him as a deceiver. When he declared himself the Son of God and their Deliverer, they thought him an impostor and blasphemer, and worthy of death. After sentencing him in their own Sanhedrin Court, not having the authority to execute him themselves, they charged him with the only crime which the Roman Governor would hear—treason to the Roman Emperor. By threatening Pilate that they would associate him with Jesus in treason, they finally effected the crucifixion of the Antitypical Passover Lamb. He was stretched upon the cross much after the manner in which they impaled their Passover lamb for its roasting.

“On the Tenth of the First Month.”

Additionally, let us note the fact that just at the appropriate time, namely, the tenth day of the first month, when the Chosen People were taking up their lambs for the Passover, Jesus presented himself as the Lamb of God, and was rejected. His presentation was on the exact day and in exactly the manner prescribed by the Prophet Zechariah, “Behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass . . . He shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.” (Zechariah 9:9,10.) This was fulfilled to the very letter, as we have already seen. It was fulfilled as the Prophet foretold, on the very day that Israel’s “double” of experiences began. The Chosen People were blinded with self-satisfaction and repudiated the lowly King and refused to accept him as their Lamb and to receive him into their hearts and homes. Nevertheless, he proceeded to fulfill this wonderful type. As the antitypical Passover Lamb, he died on the fourteenth day, exactly in accord with the type.

Forthwith, some of the Chosen People received a great blessing through him—the Apostles of Jesus and others of the people whose

hearts were in a humble, obedient and faithful condition. These fed upon the Lamb and the unleavened bread of God's Grace through him. These recognized the blood of Jesus as sprinkled upon the doorposts and the lintels of the hearts of the "household of faith." These, very shortly afterward, were enabled to celebrate, and they still commemorate, the death of the Lamb of God as being the foundation for all their hopes and joys and blessings. These have therefore a continual season of refreshing in the favor of the Lord, whether they be poor or rich, whether their honors be many or few as respects earthly things. These were recognized by the Father on the fiftieth day after Jesus became by resurrection "the Sheaf of the first fruits"—on the Day of Pentecost. He received them to a higher plane, begetting them of the Holy Spirit and engaging with them that if faithful in following in the footsteps of Jesus, they may be sharers with the Lamb of God in his great triumph and Spiritual Kingdom, through which the *earthly blessings* will very shortly begin to come to God's Chosen People—Israel.

Not only will Messiah be King of the Jews, but, as the prophecy of Zechariah declares, "His Kingdom shall be from sea to sea" (world-wide.) All nations shall recognize his power and glory, and unto him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of Jehovah. Israel will receive the glorious Messiah promised to them, when in power and great glory he shall be revealed in the end of this age. They, meantime, will have missed (except the remnant of Isaiah 10:21-23) the honor offered to them first of constituting his Spiritual Bride. (Psalm 45:9-14.) But, then, God foreknew and through the Prophets foretold this. (Isaiah 10:22; Isaiah 1:9.) And, anyway, Jehovah kept *hidden* the fact that Messiah's Kingdom would be a spiritual one. Not one promise of a *Spiritual* Messiah was given either in the Law or the Prophets. Every promise from Genesis to Malachi is *earthly*. Even to Abraham the promise reads, "All the *land* which thou seest, to thee will I give it and *to thy seed after thee*." Israel has not lost this promise. Not only are the Chosen People represented in the Spiritual Seed of Abraham most prominently, but now shortly Abraham and all their faithful prophets are to be made "Princes (rulers) in all the earth." (Psalm 45:16)—then the seed of Abraham will be uplifted and made the channel of Divine blessings to all peoples. "God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew." He is about to fulfill to them every good promise under his New Cove-

nant of Jeremiah 31:31—under its greater Mediator and grander antitypical priesthood symbolized by Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4) and foretold by Malachi 3:1-3.

Like Unto Moses, but Greater.

According to Jehovah's Plan, the Messianic King will stand as Mediator between God and Israel—as the antitype of Moses—the antitypical Priest, King, Messiah, long-promised. The fact that he will not be in the flesh, but a spiritual Messiah, instead of decreasing his glory and power, will augment them. Earthly glory the Israelites will have—earthly blessings beyond their fondest dreams, from the hand of him whom Jehovah has highly exalted as “the Son of David the King of Israel.” Thus from Israel, under the New Covenant through Israel's Mediator, a way of approach to God will be opened up for all the Gentiles. Thus it is written, “Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the Mountain (Kingdom) of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion (the Spiritual Kingdom) shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (the earthly Kingdom of Israel restored.) (Isaiah 2:3.) And it shall come to pass that the nation that will not thus recognize Jerusalem as the Government of God then and there established—upon that same nation there shall be no rain (no special blessing.)—Zechariah 14:17.

Notice how this item respecting the blessing of the Gentiles is mentioned by the Prophet Zechariah. We read: “Messiah shall speak peace to the Gentiles.” But this blessing of peace will come primarily to God's Chosen People and proceed through them to the Gentiles. Not only so, but the same holds good in respect to the selection of Spiritual Israelites. We have already noticed how some of the Chosen People, a “remnant,” as the Prophet declares, were ready for Messiah and did receive Jesus and received the Pentecostal blessing.

These, as we have noted, were the Apostles of the Christian Church and the earliest representatives of the same; but after giving the first opportunity for the spiritual blessings to the Chosen People, Messiah favored and spoke peace also to the Gentiles in respect to the Spiritual Seed of Abraham. And so the Gospel of Grace, or invitation to become members or associates with Messiah on the spirit plane, has been, in God's Providence, extended to the Gentiles throughout

this Gospel Age—to whomsoever of them has had the hearing ear and the understanding and obedient heart. Thus of both Jews and Gentiles Jehovah has been selecting worthy individuals for association with his Son, the Redeemer. These are but a “little flock” out of nominal millions. To this “little flock” the Redeemer said, “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom”—the Kingdom that is to bless Israel, and, through Israel, to speak peace to all Gentiles—to every member of Adam’s race—to afford all a full opportunity of return from sin and death conditions to harmony with God and everlasting life.

Ah, yes, there are precious lessons and blessings in the Passover type, and in its antitype, for God’s Chosen People, when God’s due time shall come. He declares that the condition of blindness and being outcast from his favor which has prevailed with the Chosen People for more than eighteen centuries is not to prevail forever, but merely until he shall have gathered, first from Israel, and subsequently from the Gentiles, his “elect” associates on the spirit plane. Then all Israel shall be recovered from this blindness, and blessings shall come to them in abundant measure. Their casting off and blinding as a nation are intended of God to work out for them a national blessing. Under adverse conditions they have been held together as a people condemned as a whole, that they might receive mercy as a whole.—Romans 11:30-32.

“The Church of the First-Born.”

Be it remembered that not all of the Israelites were in danger that night in which the Passover lamb was eaten—only the first-born of the Chosen People were *passed over*. A little later, God exchanged the first-born of every family for an entire tribe—the tribe of Levi. Hence that one tribe thereafter represented those saved by the passing over of the destroying angel—saved by the blood of the lamb and the eating of its flesh with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

Two types blend in this:

(1) The spiritual Israelites to whom we have already referred constitute the primary type: Of these the glorified Messiah is the great High Priest—the antitype of Aaron who sacrificed, and of Melchizedek, who sat a priest upon his throne. Aaron’s sons typified the saintly few who, through evil report and good report, have followed

their Master in sacrifice faithfully unto death. As we have seen, the first of these were called out from God's Chosen People. When not a sufficient number of these were ready, the remainder were accepted from among the Gentiles, because these were actuated by the faith and obedience of Abraham.

(2) Additionally, there is a class of faithful but less zealous followers of Jesus who have done noble work of service, but have failed to some extent of the proper sacrificing spirit. These, who correspond to the Levites, are similarly called from both Jews and Gentiles.

Unitedly these two classes, typed in the Priests and Levites, constitute "the church of the first-borns whose names are written in heaven." They are "a kind of first-fruits unto God of his creatures." (James 1:18.) These, together, selected primarily from God's Chosen People and secondly from the Gentiles, were typified in the first-born of Israel who were passed over in that night, when the first-born of Egypt were slain. Thus we see that this Gospel Age, from the time of the first Advent of Jesus to the time of the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom, is the nighttime when darkness covers the earth (the *civilized* earth) and gross darkness the heathen. The blood of Jesus, the Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), is sprinkled upon the door-post by the household of faith and they are under its protection and may share in the unleavened bread of Truth, and in the strength and blessing freely provided by the Sacrifice and accepted and incorporated by the believer.

After-Borns as Well as First-Borns.

A great mistake has been made by many of us in the past in supposing that only the first-born passed over by God's Providence—passed from death unto life—during this Gospel night, are to be saved. A glance at the picture or type given to us through God's Chosen People in their Passover shows us clearly to the contrary. Instead of the first-born of Israel being the only saved ones, the narrative shows that following the dark night came a morning of blessing and joy and going forth from bondage—not merely for the first-born, but for all Israel. As in the type the first-born became the Priests and Levites, the religious leaders of the people out of darkness and slavery into emancipation and light, so the Church of Messiah, elected during this Gospel Age from Jews and Gentiles, will lead forth

Israel—all the tribes of God's Chosen People, from the power of Sin and Death, in due time—in the morning of the New Dispensation, the Messianic Kingdom. Moses, who led forth God's Chosen People in type represented this great Messiah on the spirit plane, who will shortly lead forth his people Israel and grant to them all the blessings and privileges and favors included in the Abrahamic promise—and more, doubtless, than we have yet appreciated.

The fact that only God's Chosen People were delivered from Egyptian bondage—that only they crossed the Red Sea dry shod—that only they had the special Divine providences of the Wilderness, should not be understood to signify that the Messiah will bless the natural seed of Abraham only. The blessing will come first to God's Chosen People, who for the fathers' sakes are beloved still and who are to be brought into Covenant relationship with God. Other nations are not included in the type because in order to come into fellowship and relationship with God through the great Mediator, the Messiah, they will needs become citizens of Zion, members of God's Chosen People.

This may astonish some noble Christian people, some well-versed Bible students, because many of these have evidently overlooked certain features of the Divine Promise respecting the New Covenant. That Covenant, we are distinctly told, is to be made between God and His Chosen People, and not with any other nation. And thus it will be that according to God's Covenant and oath to Abraham, "All the families of earth shall be blessed" through Israel. The making of the New Law Covenant with Israel will bless the other nations because the opportunity will be granted to every nation and people to come under the terms of that New (Law) Covenant mediated by the Greater than Moses. To come under that Covenant will mean a full subordination to the Divine Law as expressed in the Law of Moses and the high interpretation of the same—Love the fulfilling of the Law.

The Great Messiah, who will thus bless God's Chosen People first, will be pleased to serve all nations and peoples as they shall prove willing to accept his favors and to conform to the Divine Laws. Thus all nations will gradually become of the seed of Abraham during Messiah's reign. And thus in the end of Messiah's reign, the promise of God to Abraham will have fulfillment. "Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea for multitude." Here the two

seeds are clearly set forth—(1) The Spiritual or Messianic Seed, the Antitypical Priests and Levites on the spirit plane, symbolized by the stars. (2) Israel absorbing the obedience of all the nations of earth through Messiah's mediation of the New Covenant will swell the seed of Abraham until, at the close of Messiah's Kingdom, all mankind will be in and of God's Chosen People; because all who will refuse to hear, to obey that Prophet, Priest and King, Greater than Moses, will be cut off from life in the Second Death—everlasting destruction.