

Be Spiritually Prepared for the Passover

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[**Good companion sermons:** New Creation in Christ; Passover and it's connection to Healing; A Fresh Look at the Emblems of Passover; The JOY of Passover and Unl Bread]

In just a very short time we will be partaking of the broken bread and drinking the small cup of wine as well as washing each other's feet at the Passover service. ***Will you be spiritually and mentally ready*** for this very special service that is a commemoration of the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord and Master, the Lamb of God, our Passover?

That is what we'll be talking about today: getting ready, being ready, for the Passover, so we fulfill the command of 1 Corinthians to come to the Passover after we have examined ourselves, and the other points it gives. ***We'll go carefully through that passage, we'll remind ourselves what the Passover is all about, and I hope and feel that by the time you're done with this message, you'll have the information and the desire to do what you have to do to come to the Passover with the properly prepared mindset, with thanksgiving and deep, deep gratitude for everything our Master has been to us, and has done for us.***

We often go back to the original Passover in Exodus 12, and I probably will too some time in this message, but let's not forget that the lambs of Exodus 12 pictured the reality – pictured what John calls “the Lamb of God”.

The *reason* we observe the Passover is to remind ourselves that we all started out as sinners cut off from our Holy Father, God. The penalty and wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**), but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We've all worked the wages of death. Every last one of us. There are people who appear good and who are good by the world's standards, but nobody has been perfect, so we all have been judged guilty and have been under the eternal death penalty. All of us surely will die for our own sins unless Someone pays the penalty for us, that allows God to PASS OVER our sins and forgive us. Even if we never sin again in the future, if our past sins aren't forgiven, we are still under the curse (Galatians 3:10-15).

SOMEONE had to come to be willing to die for you and me. But that One had to be someone whose life was worth more than just one life, for if He were but a man, He could die for only ONE other person. All human life is worth the same. So the option God had was to offer Jesus Christ, His own Son, a GOD being like Father is. JESUS' ONE LIFE – since He was the Creator and spokesman who spoke the creation, “Let there be light”, etc. - is worth more than all humans who have been ever born or ever will be born.

Don't listen to this load of dung that some are putting out there that Jesus was not, is not, GOD. Jesus was God before He became a man, He was still divine while a human being, and He is GOD now.

*We know Jesus was God before He came as a Son of Man because of **John 1:1-3**.*

We know He was a divine-human on earth because of several key points, including this one:

- **ONLY God can be worshipped.** Jesus said so Himself (**Matthew 4:10**). There are numerous, numerous cases where Jesus allowed Himself to be worshipped, and every

other godly man since then and before then stopped people from worshipping them. So Jesus did not sin when He allowed people to worship Him because He *was* God on earth when that happened. See **Matthew 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; Mark 5:6-8; John 9:38.**

Jesus also clearly said, while He was a human on earth, “My Father and I are one” -- **John 10:30.** And for that very clear statement, He was almost stoned (verses 31-33), because the Jews hearing that perfectly understood what He meant!

I certainly hope we all understand that Jesus has been resurrected and sits on God’s right hand and is God now, as He was before coming down to earth. Print off the transcript for a list of 4-5 verses, but I’ll refer to 2-3 of them now.

When **Thomas** met the resurrected Jesus, and was told to put his hands in the hole in Jesus’ side, what did Thomas say? **John 20:28** “And Thomas answered and said *to Him*, “My Lord *and my God!*”

We can read how all heavenly creatures now worship Him – like **Revelation 5:14.**

Other good verses for showing Jesus is truly GOD now are 1 **John 5:20; 2 Peter 1:1; Hebrews 1:8-13** where it says in **verse 8** – “to *the Son* He says, ‘Your throne *O GOD*, is forever and ever...” Paul also calls Jesus – in **Titus 2:13** “...our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”.

So Jesus’ *one* life is worth more than all of our lives put together since He is the creator, God being.

Now turn to John 1.

John 1:10-18 “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. **12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

[LET THAT SINK IN.]

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’”

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. **17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.** 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

John 1:29, 35-36 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “**Behold! The Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!

v.35 - Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “**Behold the Lamb of God!**”

The good news of Passover is that the *innocent blood* of the Lamb of God *does indeed* pay our penalty for us, and the debt we owed has been stamped “PAID IN FULL”. We need to come to Passover fully appreciating what Jesus has done for us, and the sacrifice also of Father, our heavenly dear Father, our Abba – who had to turn His back on His beloved only Son and eternal companion in His *most* painful and horrible moments of His entire life.

Because Father loves the *rest* of us so much, He placed every sin that has ever been committed on to the head of Jesus His son, and since we know that sin cuts us off from God (**Isaiah 59:2**), DEAR ABBA in Heaven had to also cut Jesus off from himself – a severing of ties that Jesus had never before experienced! It was horrifying for Jesus, it was so awful, that even though He knew it was coming, He screams out from the agony of the cross, “OH MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY – WHY have YOU forsaken me?” (**Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1**). **It was a shock to experience His Father – with whom He was one – abandoning him.**

One more thing: you know, when you’ve really come to see *yourself* for what you are and come before our holy God and ask His forgiveness, how badly you felt for the enormity of your sin? I’ve sure been there. Now how do you think Jesus must have felt, who had never personally known sin that He had ever committed, -- how do you think He felt as every vile sin that has ever been committed was put on Him? No wonder He screamed! As bad as you and I have been, we’ve never been “so bad” as having done and been *all* the sins of the world from Adam onwards!

Are we beginning to see why that moment was such a literally dark moment?? And I feel the blackness over that city almost 2000 years ago, was reflecting the *gloom* in heaven as ABBA *could not* answer, *would not* answer, did not answer His only Son who screamed out in amazement at being abandoned on the cross. He knew it would happen, because He was the one who prophesied it in **Psalm 22:1**, and yet when it came down to actually happening, I think it still was a shock to Jesus. **The sacrifices and covenant and the gloom of Genesis 15:6-21 was all about this same event, to the very hour and day.** All this happened because of you, and because of me, and because they wanted us to be forgiven and to be in their family! I envision the heavenly temple was lonely that afternoon.... *And I envision Abba sobbing His heart out, all alone. I’m sure He made all the 24 elders and living creatures and angels all leave – while He faced His own Golgotha!*

THAT STORY I JUST TOLD YOU, IS THE PASSOVER STORY, THE TRUE MEANING OF THE STORY OF THE INNOCENT LAMBS KILLED ON THE 14th OF the month of ABIB, back in Egypt, in Exodus 12. What I’ve just told you is the POINT of Exodus 12.

(Ex. 12:1-14) This is why their lamb had to be perfect – without defect – depicting Jesus’ perfect, sinless life. This is why the lamb had to be a young male, to depict Christ, had to be selected ahead of time, as Jesus was foreordained to die for us, from *before* the foundation of the world who was 33 when He gave His life for us (3 and 3 comes to 6, the number of man). This is why it world. This is why the head of the house had to present the lamb – depicting GOD our *Father*, the head of His house, had **only lamb He could offer** for the household – and He so loved us all that He willingly gave His only begotten Son.

There’s a very telling verse in Exodus 12. It’s verses 12-13. God is speaking.

Ex 12:12-13 ‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike 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. 13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I **will PASS OVER you**; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.’ That’s where the word “Passover” comes from. ***It’s repeated in verse 23.***

One more thing: as Abraham offered Isaac – God offered Jesus. We find out from other sources that Isaac was 33 years old, and could have easily overpowered his aging father, but willingly accepted. This pictured Jesus, who apparently **willingly gave Himself** also.

John 10:17-18 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because *I lay down My life* that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, *but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.* This command I have received from My Father."

And why did Jesus have to die by CRUCIFIXION? Why couldn't he just take an overdose of hemlock, or have a snake bite him, die of old age, or surely die in a less painful way than a crucifixion? Several reasons. Do you know the reasons? You really should know, as we come to Passover.

- it would have been a sin to commit suicide, which is murder of the self. Jesus had to be sinless.
- **sin requires death by execution. So Jesus had to be executed. He could not die of natural causes or old age and be our Redeemer.** *Those who don't repent, will actually be brought back to life to receive their penalty: execution (not torment forever in a hell fire)*
- *Jesus had to die by shed blood*, for "the life is in the blood" and without the shedding of blood there is no remission (**Hebrews 9:22**). **Jesus did not die of a broken heart**, but by a Roman soldier thrusting in his spear into His side (**John 19:38**).
- **Sin is painful, and forgiving sin is not easy or cheap, but is very painful.** *The kind of death Jesus suffered had to reflect that pain and suffering.* It was so painful that it's given its name to extra severe pain, "excruciating" we say, which comes from the word meaning "the pain one feels while being crucified." The scourging was so brutal that apparently He was virtually unrecognizable, and so much of His skin was flayed off, every bone was visible (**Psalms 22:17; Isaiah 52:14**).
- Jesus, the Son of Man, died for *all* mankind, so he was put to death by both Jew and Gentile if you think about it. In fact, we all put Him to death. Peter exclaimed on Pentecost, in Acts 2, "**YOU** have killed Christ" – **Acts 2:23**.

If we believe in this story, and believe ON Jesus, and accept His death in our behalf, what happens?

John 3:16-18 happens. "For God so loved the world that **He gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Because of all that, we have this **wonderful passage in Romans 3**, please be turning there. If we *believe* on Jesus Christ, He not only *redeems* us, but will also provide His righteousness in us and for us, to present us blameless before God, as long as we stay in relationship with Him.

Romans 3:21-26 "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 *even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.* [REMEMBER this point – we have to believe, we have to live by faith in and on Christ.] For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 *being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to *demonstrate His righteousness*, because in His forbearance ***God had passed over the sins that were previously committed***, 26 to demonstrate at the present time *His* righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Now please turn to Hebrews 9. Remember the blood of bulls and goats – and sheep – or anything else – could not have saved us.

Hebrews 9:11-15 “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. **12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.** 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, **14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

Hebrews 10:3-4 “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.**”

There you have it! Jesus’ blood was required, and it had to be the blood of Someone perfect, whose life was worth more than all the rest put together, and He had to die by execution and shed blood.

So now we come to the Passover service in a few more days.

It is not like any ordinary meeting, and not even like a regular Sabbath service. The Passover is kept on a specific date once a year – on the 14th of Abib, the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar which falls in the spring. We do not keep it just whenever we feel like it. And neither do we *dare* come to the Passover without first taking the time to carefully reflect on it ahead of time.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner *will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* [read that again!] 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

NKJV: 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, *not discerning the Lord's body.*”

NIV says in verse 29: “For anyone who eats and drinks *without recognizing the body of the Lord* eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

1 Cor 11:30, continuing: “*For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [die]* 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

We’re going to talk about our mind set that we need to be aware of *before* we come to the Passover. So what is it we are *commanded* and *warned* to do?

- **be sure we’re not taking the Passover unworthily or in an unworthy MANNER.** The better translation, I feel, is “Unworthy *manner*” rather than “unworthily”. The Bible is clear that there is ONE who is worthy – and that Christ. Christ *in us* makes US worthy also. But as we come to Passover, He wants us coming with a *deep* recognition of its

importance and its meaning. He wants us coming having thought and prayed deeply about it.

- We are commanded to **examine ourselves** – not someone else – *and then after the examination to go ahead and EAT and drink* the Passover. It does not say to examine yourself and then decide whether or not to eat... but examine and then “SO LET him eat..and drink...”
- be sure we come there **recognizing the body of the Lord, or discerning the body** of the Lord. What on earth does THAT mean? We’ll also cover that today, because I think this is CRUCIAL to understand also.

PASSOVER IS SUCH A POSITIVE TIME

In ALL of this, I caution one thing: that in doing these 3 points – coming in a worthy manner, **examining ourselves** and recognizing the body of Christ – **is NOT to be done in a maudlin, depressing, down on yourself attitude**. I really feel over the years that *many* in the body come to the Passover feeling so worthless, so down, so depressed, so negative about themselves and *so* somber – that we *forget* what the Passover is actually doing and has done for us already!

The Passover is not only about what has been done for us by Christ – but what a clean future that sacrifice gives us. **Rather than just look back and feel depressed, why not look at what JESUS has done, deeply thank Him and Father for that, and then come with a deep gratefulness and attitude of praise and thanksgiving as we gather together to observe and keep the Passover.** Some of us do *so* much self examination in a way that *looks back* – that we get naturally *down*. I’d strongly recommend you remember this: Passover gives us a *new* start. Passover is when God *passed over* our sins and forgave us. **Passover is so positive. Sure – it’s about the crucifixion of Jesus, but it’s also about what that crucifixion DOES for us. And that’s wonderful.**

I want the theme of this pre-Passover sermon to be one of profound appreciation, love, positive feelings, joy and gratefulness and even ecstasy as we humbly eat and drink.

GOD LOVES YOU AS HE LOVES JESUS

You and I are the very special possession of God, His very own special people. He loves us more deeply than we can possibly imagine...but try! Do you realize how much God loves *you*– I mean YOU...what’s your name? I mean you, wherever you are, whomever you are.

What would you say? Would God love Jesus more than He loves us? (pause) Consider carefully, and truthfully how you feel about that.... Now those of you who have 2 or more children, do you love the 2nd and 3rd born less than your first born? You know you love them *all* the same way. **What about God? Do you think God loves His first child more than the others? Be honest.** You know you think He *does*. But now turn to **Romans 2:11**. Do you believe this – or not?

Romans 2:11 “For *there is NO partiality with God.*” You can write down *other* passages too – like **Ephesians 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17**. God doesn’t play favorites, or have favorites. In order for that to be TRUE and not a LIE – He would have to love you as much as He loves Jesus.

Part of the problem is we realize we can be more *pleased* with one child than the other – if one is obedient and one is not – but that is not the same as “love”. One thing that does have to be made clear: God IS a respecter of *righteousness*. There are just too many verses that God says He *hates* liars and those who do wickedly. That is why – even as much as He loved David – when David did wickedly, God really *hammered* David.

I hope you’re not confused from this. **God loves people equally – but loves and respects righteousness and hates wickedness.** He IS a respecter of *righteousness*. There are simply dozens and dozens and scriptures that give us that concept. When the wicked people *repent*, He gives us His love and then wants us to love Him in turn by doing the things that please Him – by obedience, in other words.

A good example of this is the story of Cain and Abel. Turn please to **Genesis 4** with me. In this passage, Cain and Abel each bring an offering to God. God accepts Abel’s offering of a lamb, and is not pleased with Cain’s bloodless offering of some grain.

Genesis 4:3-7 “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but *He did not respect Cain and his offering*. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.”

[now notice **God’s tenderness in trying to help Cain understand**, and giving him some hope that He could be accepted by God too...a strong lesson for us too, especially when we feel God’s displeasure]

Verse 6 “So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 *If you do well, will you not be accepted?* And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

So there’s the rub, as we come to Passover. We know we’ve failed – even recently, perhaps. Unless you feel you are perfect now. I’d recommend you listen before Passover to my sermon titled “**New Creation**”, for more insight into this one point than I can share now.

Jesus *erased* our sins, and continues to erase them *AS* we sin, *if* we daily come in repentance, to Him seeking relationship in Him and with Him. Remember Jesus Himself taught us, “if your brother comes to you seven times in a day, and seven times asks your forgiveness, forgive him!” (**Luke 17:4**)

I will prepare a sermon soon titled “Are you IN Christ?” God tells us *all* of us have sinned and all fell short. Jesus IS our Passover and it is His righteousness that becomes ours. *Our* lives are Hidden in Christ! After Paul’s anguished desperation in Romans 7 – the sins I hate, those I do – and then he ends Romans 7 with “who shall save me... I thank Jesus Christ my Lord”. Then his very next statement (**Rom 8:1**) is that “there is now NO condemnation to those who are in Christ, who no longer walk after the flesh but after the spirit”.

Because of Jesus Christ, we are no longer condemned! Praise the Lord for that! Accept that. **Some of you listening to this for some reason like to live in guilt. Give it up! It will kill you!** We’ve taken guilt to an Olympic class level, we’re *world* class guilt trippers, and what a shame, what a waste of what Jesus is offering us! Let it go. Give it up. ENJOY the debt being finally PAID

OFF, IN FULL, NOT A LOAN, IT'S GONE. Hallelujah! We've been washed, and scrubbed of ALL our sin, even if PEOPLE like to bring it up once in a while, GOD doesn't! It's as far as the east is from the west, we're told.

Now back to the question I asked before: Could God our Father possibly love me, love you, love the person next to you – as much as He loves Jesus?

John 17:20-26 NIV: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, *[that includes US!]* 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to ***let the world know that you sent me and HAVE LOVED THEM EVEN AS [in the same way as] YOU HAVE LOVED ME.***"

NLT verse 23: "I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them AS MUCH AS YOU LOVE ME."
[PAUSE]

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order ***that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.***"

The love God has for YOU is the same love, in the same way, that He loved His firstborn son. In the same way you love your 2nd and 3rd and 4th child in the same way you love the first one – **in that same way our heavenly Father in whom is NO partiality – loves you and me.**

Can you believe that, or do you think God is lying when He inspires Paul and others to write that "in Him is NO partiality". (**Romans 2:11**)

You and I are a CHOSEN PEOPLE, a HOLY people – just like YOUR daughter, YOUR son, is special above all other children in the world. Now let's make it plural: your daughterS, your sonS, PLURAL – more than all other children in the world.

1 Peter 2:9-10 " But YOU are a **chosen** generation, a **royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people** [now for what reason: continue reading], THAT you may proclaim ***the praises of Him*** who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 **who once were not a people but ARE NOW THE PEOPLE OF GOD**, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

THIS SPECIAL CALLING applies to all people God has called – whether white, black, asian or mixed. Jesus was "the Son of *Man*" – not just the "son of Israel". Even in Jesus' ancestral line, given to us in **Matthew 1**, it is obvious that even Jesus had some Gentile Blood in Him – including the blood of **Ruth** a Moabitess, **Tamar** and **Rahab** – both who were Canaanites. Jesus **was not of pure racial strain on purpose, to show He was the Son of MAN and that He died for ALL mankind, black, white, asian, Hispanic -- EVERYBODY!** Praise God for that!!! He can be everybody's Savior!!

I hope NO CHRISTIAN listening to me has even one ounce of racial bias because there is no distinction ***spiritually*** between Jew or Gentile. We've got to get over that. In Christ, we are all one –

and there is therefore no more Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, as far as it pertains to salvation (**Galatians 3:28**). **There was nothing wrong with Boaz marrying Ruth, from Moab**, as long as she had first converted to the true God, which she did and which made her an Israelite. In fact, Paul says in the New Testament, that if you are free to marry, he only puts 1 stipulation on it: marry a believer, someone “in the Lord” (**1 Corinthians 7:39**).

While we’re in 1st Peter 2, let’s understand there are special responsibilities for being God’s special people and so let’s keep reading, **verses 11-12**.

1 Peter 2:11-12 “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable* among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

We see this correlation again in Titus 2. Please be turning there.

Titus 2:13-14 “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 *who gave Himself for us*, that He might **redeem** us *from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*.”

*****In examining ourselves prior to Passover, the examination I would like to urge us all to be doing is this: EVALUATE HOW MUCH WE APPRECIATE AND ACCEPT what God has done for you and me.**

- *And secondly, are we reflecting that appreciation in a life that brings Him glory? A life that has FAITH in Jesus?*

There *are* responsibilities now on us. Examine where we have let down over the past year. Use this as a time of repentance, of re-committing to follow the leading of the Spirit more into a life of obedience and therefore also the fruit of God’s spirit.

Some major areas I believe the church in general needs to be examining lately – and I’ll mention other areas later in the message –

- **seeking a relationship with God** more than you ever have before – daily prayer, daily study – or we’re showing by not doing that, that we don’t believe we need Him. I believe doing this, **knowing** GOD, will let most of my next points almost naturally fall into place. Your other sins you’re fighting will get tackled, if we do this thing first!
- Seeking to really *know* God, intimately. It is what real life is really all about.
- living a life of *faith* in Christ...not a life of stress, worry. This is one of the big areas we are to be examining. I have a 3-part message on “Living by Faith” you can check out.
- esteeming others better than yourself; not looking down on other Christian groups and assemblies or feeling superior to anyone.
- write down 3-5 biggest areas you are going to overcome this year with God’s spirit. These biggest areas will differ from person to person. For some those areas may be: their

marriage; perhaps lack of self control in finances; could be sexual sins; could be alcohol; could be abusing the temple of the Spirit – we’re too fat, in terrible health (the kind we can do something about, is what I mean). Then write down the steps you are going to take to *conquer*, to overcome these areas.

Other areas you may consider: worry, doubt, harshness, impatience, greed, selfishness.

- **LAODECIANISM** -- the prophesied state of the end-time church (**Revelation 3:16-22**). Feeling you’re OK spiritually. Are we lukewarm about the things of God? Blind, wrtched, miserable, naked spiritually. I’ll speak to those themes sometime in the future – being naked spiritually, for example. We’ve got to repent! We’re commanded to repent of that!

DELEAVENING

Some of you may be wondering when I’ll say something about “**deleavening**”. If you’re web surfing and have no history with us, by that I mean the commands to put leaven out of our homes right after Passover and during the 7 days of Unleavened bread (**Exodus 12:15-20; 13:6-9; Lev. 23:5-8; Num. 28:17; Acts 12:3; Acts 20:8; 1 Cor. 5:7-8**) We know that even in the New Testament they deleavened, because Paul says so to the very carnal Corinthians (**1 Corinthians 5:7-8**).

The *only* way they were not leavened could *only* be physically, at this point. They certainly were not *spiritually* deleavened. We know from previous studies that leaven is most often used as a symbol of sin and that putting leaven out of our homes means that when we accept the washing/cleansing and forgiveness of Passover, that we then walk a new walk, a walk that has put sin - leaven – out of our lives. We still sin – just as we still find leaven here and there – but we’re not practicing a life of sin anymore.

Some of you spend hours and hours and hours cleaning, re-cleaning, your homes and putting out the leaven. My wife and I also *carefully* put out the leaven. Yes, we *carefully* check the whole house, the cupboards, empty the vacuum cleaner bags, clean out the toasters, and carefully clean.

But I’ll say this: as you do the physical, don’t forget the point of all that physical deleavening. Don’t forget the spiritual meaning. Don’t put so much time into this physical activity that you are too worn out to do the spiritual, the more important deleavening and self-examination. That’s the *main* deleavening in the new covenant times. Think about that. The problem is, we are physical and we find it easier to tackle a physical chore than a spiritual chore.

We find it easier to be zealous about not eating pork, or not keeping Christmas – than to put out greed and selfishness.

So please – as you vacuum and deleaven – put at least as much time into *spiritual* examination and cleaning and prayer. And don’t be worn out by the time Passover service begins.

It says to **examine YOURSELF** -- not your spouse, not your minister, not your kids, not *anyone* else. Just you. Paul may have been feeling a bit of criticism here, because he says in 1 Cor 9:3 that some of them were examining *him*. And in **1 Corinthians 9:3** he says “My defense to those who examine me is this....”

The Greek word in this verse is used 23x in the New Testament. It is used most often in the sense of prove yourself as in Gal. 6:4, and in the 2nd part of 2 Cor 13 as TEST yourself.

Give yourself an exam, a test, proof read your life to see where you and I are getting sloppy. But here's what the Greek Dictionary says – that the word is to “test”, with the implication to approve and allow. It is positive testing with a hope for a positive outlook.

NT:1381 dokimazo (dok-im-ad'-zo); from NT:1384; to test (literally or figuratively); by implication, to approve: KJV - allow, **discern**, examine, (ap-) prove, **try**. (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 “Examine (peirazo – a different word) yourselves **as to whether you are in the faith**. Test (dokimazo) yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? -- unless indeed you are disqualified. 6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.”

NT Strong's # 3985: peirazo (pi-rad'-zo); from NT:3984; to test (objectively), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline: KJV - assay, examine, go about, prove, tempt (-er), try.

That word translated “examine” in 2 Cor 13:5 is used **38x in** the New Testament and is translated “test, tempt, tempter, tried.” It means to come under examination, testing, being tried. Interestingly, it's not the same Greek word used in 1 Cor. 11.

In the KJV and NKJV, we are to examine whether or not we are “in THE faith”. The translation can apparently be either “in THE faith” – meaning are you practicing the right doctrines, believing the right things. Or, it can mean “are you living **BY FAITH, IN FAITH**” as a way of life. Is your life a life that **REFLECTS** faith in Christ? If you haven't heard my 3-part series on “living by faith”, that is what it's all about. I suggest you hear it some time soon. The Greek word for “faith” there, is “*Pistis*” – the same word we used over and over again the 3 part series about faith.

Some translations translate it that way: are you living a life of faith? When people watch us, do they see a people stressed out to the max; people who are worried all the time, or people who are living a life that is worry-free, and at peace in the knowledge God is in charge of their lives and is taking care of them. Jesus even commanded us to stop worrying. I think it can mean that too.

2 Cor 13:5-6 NEW LIVING TRANS: “Examine yourselves to **see if your faith is really genuine**. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test. 6 I hope you recognize that we have passed the test and are approved by God.”

2 Cor 13:5-6 TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION “Put yourselves to the test and judge yourselves, to find out **whether you are living in faith**. Surely you know that Christ Jesus is in you?--unless you have completely failed. 6 I trust you will know that we are not failures.”

And then it says after the self examination, after thanking Jesus and Father for the Passover and all it means, *feeling* very deeply and appreciatively what has been done for us -- **that we are to take the Passover**. Some of us in years past have examined ourselves and then decided *not* to take the Passover. How do we read *that* into **1 Corinthians 11:28**? “let each one examine himself and *so let* him...” eat and drink the Passover.

Taking the Passover “IN A WORTHY MANNER”: mostly has to do with the *attitude* we have when we come to Passover. We’re not taking it carelessly, callously or without thought and appreciation. It also has to do with accepting that *Jesus in us* is what makes us worthy and able to take the Passover. Do a study yourself some time, perhaps I will too – on being worthy.

Suffice it to say here, for now:

- **repentant people are humble and don’t assume they are worthy.** The prodigal son said he was not worthy to be called the son of the father (**Luke 15:19**). John the baptizer said he wasn’t worthy to carry or tie Jesus’ sandals (**Matthew 3:11**). *We’re told nobody was found worthy before the throne (Rev. 5:4-12, especially verses 4, 9, 12) except Jesus the Lamb.*

*BUT, when we “are in Christ” and He is in us, and our lives are hidden in Christ, then we too become worthy and in fact we’re commanded to walk worthy of our calling (**Ephesians 4:11; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:11**).*

Once we accept Jesus Christ, however and value and cherish what He did for us, we can be seen as worthy, as the scriptures above say.

The next thing Paul says is that we are to “discern the Lord’s body,” or “recognize” the Lord’s body. (1 Cor. 11:29) Not doing so will mean we will be guilty of

What is “the Lord’s body”? What is Paul teaching us here? What is the context?

DISCERNING or recognizing the Lord’s body has a 2 part meaning:

1. **APPRECIATING AND ACKNOWLEDGING JESUS’ ACTUAL BODY AND HIS ACTUAL SACRIFICE FOR US.** We’ve been talking a lot about that already today.
2. **RECOGNIZING, ACCEPTING, FORGIVING, LOVING AND TAKING CARE OF THE EXTENDED BODY OF CHRIST – THE CHURCH, ALL THE CHURCH – not just those in your little group!**

Ephesians 1:22-23 “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to **the church, 23 which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Colossians 1:24 “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of **Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,..**” Also **1 Corinthians 12:27 and Romans 12:5**.

You and I – the Church of God - are the Lord’s body! You are part of His own body, as much as EVE was a part of Adam’s body. And Jesus came first, and gave of His body to produce us, as surely as Adam was first, and out of his body came the woman. We are the woman of God, of Christ. We are His body.

So, when we’re told to come to Passover rightly recognizing or discerning the Lord’s body, it means the 2 things:

- **Appreciate, recognize and honor what Jesus literally did** for us in His body (the crucifixion)
- appreciate, recognize and **honor other members of the church**, and in so doing, you are honoring and recognizing Jesus Himself

The Corinthians were not respecting one another. From the first chapter onwards, Paul launches into an all-out assault on that **SIN of division** and not respecting one another. There were divisions, splits, “I am of Paul” and “I am of Apollos” going on! Paul was horrified. But don’t we see the very same thing going on today? Shame on us!

Too many say: “I am of” this “leader” and that leader and we forget who the only true leader is: our husband Jesus Christ. We’ve got to stop this one-upmanship. I know some groups, and some human self-appointed leaders who don’t permit their members to ever attend with any other group of believers and Christians. They feel God has invested all truth and blessing just into their little group. Is God so limited? God even reminded Elijah that he wasn’t the only one He was working with, but there were 7,000 others! Jesus said He had sheep “not of this flock” (**John 10:**)

When a so-called leader gets so uppity as feeling God is working only with their little group, surely you should recognize that he has become too big in his own eyes! A leader like that has become chock full of vanity and pride. God is not going to allow us to put Him into a little box of one particular splinter group or another. ‘Splinter group’. As far as I remember, splinters hurt the body.

So first of all – RECOGNIZE other groups of believers and don’t ignore or refuse them.

FOOTWASHING

Next: it has to also mean we should ACCEPT whom God has forgiven and accepted! Isn’t that a huge part of the meaning of the footwashing? Sure, we know the footwashing service we do at the Passover, as Jesus did in John 13 – be turning there – we know it pictures being a servant, being humble, being willing to serve one another. We also know it pictures washing away the “dirt” of sin we’ve picked up along the way.

But there’s far more! Let’s review some key points here:

John 13:1-17

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

2 And supper being ended [most other translations say “during supper” – which is more correct, because it is clear that after the footwashing, they were still eating; see verses 26-30], “the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, 3 **Jesus**, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 **rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.** 5 **After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.** 6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? **13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.** 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

I want to repeat verse 14: ***"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet"***

So what do we do? We go about the physical act of washing feet and may be forgetting the SPIRITUAL intent of the footwashing. It is a washing! Washing is about washing away sins and becoming clean again. Now notice carefully what Jesus said:

- "I've already washed everyone's feet in here"
- "If you see I've already washed everyone's feet, then you should wash each other too"

The point is this: when I get on my knees at the footwashing service, to prepare to wash someone else's feet, I should be thinking: "Jesus has already washed, already forgiven, already made clean, already *accepted*, this sinner in front of me. By washing his feet, I'm showing in this physical act what I have already done in my mind: ***I'VE also accepted*** whom God has accepted, I've washed whom God has washed. I hold no grudges against this person. I do not judge him or her, I do not hold any of that person's past against him, and I certainly will never bring up what Jesus has already washed away."

Having said that, there are entire church groups that won't let some Christians fellowship with them, won't let them be part of their footwashing or Passover service! DUH! It shows a complete rebuff of what Jesus did on the cross already for that person they are denying – if that person has accepted Jesus as Savior and is now in Christ. JESUS is willing to wash that person's feet – why aren't WE? Jesus is willing to eat bread with that person – why aren't we?

We're in trouble brethren, if we don't learn this – and accept and recognize the body of Christ, for whom God died! 1 Cor 11:29 says we will be judged, we will be condemned, if we aren't properly recognizing the body of Christ! Jesus said, "If I have washed someone's feet, you'd better wash that person's feet too! You'd better see them as a washed person, a forgiven and accepted person – or else you will be guilty of the body of Christ!" And then Paul goes on to say that *because* we are not lovingly accepting one another, people are remaining sick and even dying!

[for more details on this, hear my 2004 sermon "Healing and its Connection to Passover"]

When we are kind and accepting of one another, when we help and pray for one another, what does Jesus say about that? And He'll say the SAME thing if we are mean to one another, or gossipy, or

unkind, or exclusivist: “In as much as you did this to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto ME.” (**Matthew 25:34-46**)

Jesus takes very personally what we do to one another. If we’re kind to one another, we’re being kind to Jesus’ body, and He likes that. If we’re gossipy or unaccepting of someone in His body, then *HE* hurts! And He’ll defend that poor soul for whom He has died!

I go into some more of this in my sermon titled “Healing and the Passover” – and it ties in the Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah as well.

One final thing we have to say: as you come to the Passover, remember someone very, very special died on this day for you and me, and all who will accept Him and believe in Him. Jesus did it voluntarily and ... **I like to imagine this... if I were the only person who had ever sinned, I believe with all my heart that Jesus would have come to save me. Just me.** THIS personalizes the Passover and I do believe it is valid. Even the Marines won’t leave a comrade behind... wouldn’t our great God do even more to save me?

Brethren, a few days ago I was in a restaurant with a friend, and I overheard the 2 ladies in a booth behind us talking about the desserts in that restaurant. The lady speaking says, “their chocolate mousse is to DIE for!”

Hmm. Something SO good, you’d die for it?

Jesus thought having brothers and sisters, having a *wife* He loves with all His being and might – is to DIE for. And He did.

And you know what else? Now it’s our turn. As we come to Passover, we remember that Jesus, and coming to know the King, being invited to the King’s table, and being asked to drink from HIS cup, to eat from HIS hand, to SIT at HIS table with HIM -- ...that, is to die for! Some of us may well have to literally in the years ahead. Why not? Jesus died for me; we can die for Him. We’re indebted to God.

I’ll expand on that a LOT more in the next message. ***In the NEXT SERMON, we will go into the PASSOVER EMBLEMS in depth – the BREAD, the WINE, THE CUP, the FOOTWASHING – and if time allows, even discuss some interesting things about the Jewish Seder that will help you appreciate the Passover more this year perhaps than ever.***

God bless you and keep you. May we come to Passover deeply respecting Jesus’ sacrifice, Jesus’ body – and as we honor Jesus, let’s also honor the body of Christ. We’ll have examined our attitudes ahead of time, we’ll have taken the time to ponder deeply what it is we’ll be doing... and this year, we’ll come in a worthy manner, calling on the name of the Lord and believing in His love. Accepting that GOD so loved us, and all the world in fact, that He gave . He GAVE the ONLY LAMB He could, He had only ONE Son and He gave Him to us.

Back then, look at how we treated the son of God. We sure didn’t send Him back the way He came, did we? We sent Him back torn and ripped open – but that’s OK now, because God has exalted our Master above all; God has prepared Him to be KING OF KINGS – and our royal HUSBAND. You’ve been invited to be part of the royal family of the House of GOD.

Yes, in a few days, we’ll be sitting, as it were, at the table of this king. Let’s come with praise and honor and dignity! Have a wonderful day and the best Passover season ever! PWS

