

The Lord's Table and the Companions

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Reading: Exodus 12:1-16, 21-24. Luke 22:1,7,8,14-21.

We have been seeing something of what the Lord is seeking in the way of companions of a heavenly calling. We have also been seeing how the Israel of old failed Him in that respect and how, in the time of their final failure, He revealed what He had ever had in His heart, even before there was an Israel - that is, a people of a heavenly life and a spiritual nature.

The Lord's Table is perhaps the most beautiful expression of this wonderful reality of companionship with Christ.

Judas had gone out. He had taken sides with the rejecting Israel and was numbered with them in judgment, so it was not only one man but a whole nation that went out that night. Judas was but the representative of the nation which rejected Christ and was rejected by God. It is impressive that such a representative of the rejecting Israel should be right there in the presence of the companions of Christ! And there, in the inner circle, he demonstrated what had become true of Israel - he was no companion of Christ.

So, with the rejecting Israel gone out, the companions were left with their Master. Of them He was able to say: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations" (Luke 22:28).

This Lord's Table, or Lord's Supper, is one of the great features of the transition from the old Israel to the new heavenly, spiritual Israel. What the Passover was intended to mean in the old Israel has become true in the new Israel. We are, therefore, going to look at some of the features of the Passover which relate to the companions of Jesus.

We go back to the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus, where the Passover was first instituted and established, and look right into the heart of this matter to see exactly what it did mean. When we have looked closely enough we discover this; that it was the great contest between God and the gods of Egypt. God summed it all up when He said that that night He was going to finish and complete His judgment not only upon the Egyptians but upon all the gods of the Egyptians. The nine judgments which had preceded had been declared to be against the gods of the Egyptians, and you do not understand those plagues unless you recognize that factor. If it were necessary we could show you how each judgment had some relationship to the gods of Egypt. Just as an example: the frog was a sacred thing in Egypt. It was worshipped as representing a god, and God - Jehovah - turned their very gods upon themselves in judgment. So it was with every judgment. They worshipped the sun, so God blotted it out.

The whole thing is being gathered up and consummated on this Passover night. God is going to finish this quarrel that He had with the Egyptians because of their gods. He is a very jealous God and He had said: "Thou shalt have none other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

That is the heart of the thing, and we must carry that over to the Lord's Table. In the first place this Table means: No compromise with anything that is against God. It is to be the Lord, and the Lord alone.

The second thing to be noted is the focal point of this whole settlement - the first-born sons of all in Egypt. In those days, and even today, the first-born is representative of all the others. He includes the whole family, and if you touch the first-born, you are touching the parents and the family. So all the Egyptians were represented in their first-born - and the Lord said "I... will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast". Another kind of first-born, which was not of God, had to be set aside in order to bring in what the Letter to the Hebrews calls the "church of the first-born" (Hebrews 12:23). One first-born must be removed to make room for the other first-born.

Those who rightly partake at the Table are of the "church of the first-born". They are those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, and they are the companions of Christ.

Then note the third thing: the point where this whole thing was settled. It was all settled on the threshold of every home. It is a pity that the translators have not been consistent in translating a Hebrew word which you read twice in Exodus 12:22: "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason". Evidently the translators could not get the idea of the Hebrew there and so they used the word 'basin', as that seemed to suit it best. Of course, in

their minds the blood would be collected into a basin, and so the bunch of hyssop would be dipped into the basin. But the Hebrew word 'saph' is translated 'threshold' elsewhere in the Old Testament. What ought to have been said was: 'You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it into the blood that is on the threshold.' You probably know that the threshold of a house is its most sacred place. You are very particular about who crosses the threshold into your house, and that is why some superstitious people put charms over it. Sometimes it is a horseshoe - something to keep evil away, or, as they call it, 'bad luck'.

This thing has become a superstition, but behind it is this great spiritual truth - there is a threshold that God looks at as being very sacred, and behind that threshold where the blood is are His own companions. The threshold signifies a division between His companions and His enemies. Did you notice that Moses said: "None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning"? In effect he said 'Don't let any man cross that threshold into the realm where the enemies are. Let that bloodsprinkled threshold become a division between you, the Lord's own companions, and those He is going to judge.' Judas went out over the threshold when it was night.

I believe that even today (certainly it was so up to recent times) in the Jewish ritual of the Passover there is a point where the first-born goes out and opens the outside door, the door by the threshold. Then he comes back and places an empty chair at the table and an extra cup on the table. That is done in the hope that the Lord's messenger will cross the threshold, come in and take part with them. That is not here in the Bible, of course, but the Hebrews knew the meaning of the threshold - something sacred to the Lord, an open door to the Lord.

Judas went out across the threshold and he met the judgment of this world. The companions of Jesus stayed inside that night. They were protected by the precious blood and were saved from death.

The picture behind Exodus 12 is of the rightful Lord coming to His world to claim His rights, and He says: 'This is the sign and the token. Whether you own Me as your rightful Lord, or whether you do not, the sign is the sprinkled blood. When I see the blood I know that you are My friends and that you are loyal to Me. If I do not see the blood I know that you are enemies, and you will meet My judgment. My executioner is with Me and when I see the blood I say "Not in there. Leave them alone. They are My friends." When I do not see the blood I say "You go in there".' You notice that the Lord speaks in this chapter as though He is one person, and the one who is going to give judgment is another. He sends someone in. That is the picture behind the Passover.

There is just one other thing that we will mention. It is not said here in this chapter of Exodus, but it is definitely said in other places. Jeremiah (in chapter 31) says that on the night of the Passover the Lord took Israel by the hand and betrothed her to Himself. In principle, then, the Passover was a marriage ceremony. To use the language of the prophets, the Lord that night took the virgin of Israel and betrothed her unto Himself, and He made a blood covenant with her. What a lot that opens up as to the marriage relationship! It is a relationship with blood - "they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). If ever Israel had anything to do with other gods from that time it was called whoredom, fornication, adultery. It was a breach of the marriage covenant.

That is why Israel was eventually abandoned by God. They remained very religious, and still kept up the ceremony of the Passover - but the Lord Jesus said: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John 8:44). It was the devil's work to bring Jesus Christ to crucifixion, and Israel was the devil's instrument in doing it. It was the last phase of a long history of rejecting the Lord and breaking the marriage covenant.

That is the dark side. Let us look on the bright side! The Lord Jesus, in constituting the new heavenly Israel on the principles of the old, took up this very thing, in all these respects, and in this one, I think, in particular. There was a marriage supper that night in the upper room. Jesus betrothed His Church unto Himself in a covenant of blood - "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" - and so He secured His companions of the heavenly calling. Later we shall speak more fully of the 'Bride'.

We must apply all this to ourselves. On the one side it is very searching. It says: 'No compromise with anything whatever that is against the Lord.' I wonder if, every time there is a service of Holy Communion, people recognize that that is the meaning - a real and utter division between companions of the Lord and others! In the Lord's Table we celebrate our betrothal. We were joined to the Lord in holy matrimony - by His precious blood made His Bride. The marriage of the Lamb is the great coming event (Revelation 19:7).