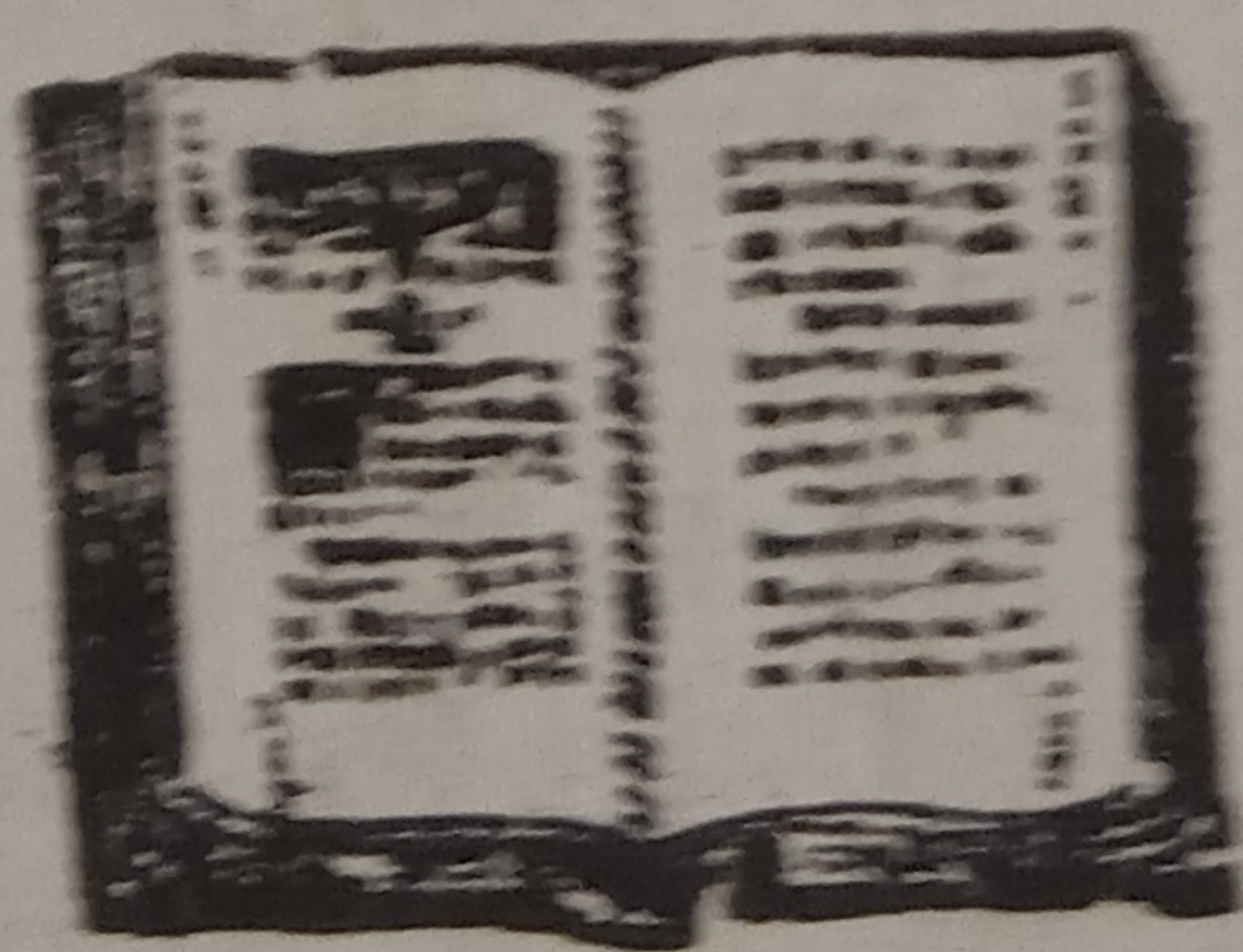


OUR PASSOVER



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Church of God (Seventh Day)

"OUR PASSOVER"

"Christ our passover is slain for us: therefore let us keep the feast".—1 Cor. 5:7, 8.

In order that we may clearly understand the apostle Paul's reference to Jesus Christ being our sacrificed passover lamb, may we consider for a few moments the first passover as originated by the Lord God with His chosen people, Israel, at their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

The institution of the original passover with Israel in Egypt brings to our minds the thoughts which Jehovah God intends for us to understand, who are now living in the climax of the gospel age. The events connected with the first passover give us instruction as to our duty in observing the true passover, of which the Egyptian episode was but a type for our guidance.

Since the apostle Paul records that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: (types, or pictures) and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"; let us take heed thereunto, and learn our lesson therefrom, that we may obey God and be blessed therein.—1 Cor. 10:11.

Jehovah's chosen people, Israel, were in the bondage of Egypt. The time for their slavery to end had come. Their years were now fulfilled, and God began His wonderful and all-wise work of deliverance that glory and honor might be His, as succeeding generations recalled to mind His mar-

velous accomplishments in the behalf of beloved Israel.

When the time was fulfilled, and He purposed in His heart that He would deliver Israel, "Jehovah spake unto His servants Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you".—Exo. 12:1-2.

Here we learn that the time element is an important phase of the passover program, as it is in all of God's plans; for He works on schedule, and the seasons are appointed beforehand. He acts when the hour is fulfilled, and is never early and never tardy. His eternal time-piece is perfect.

Then, following the origin of the ceremonial year for Israel, as given above, the Lord outlined the passover rites and ordinances which were to be carefully observed by these Israelites, who were soon to be delivered.

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house.—Ex. 12:3. No household was to be excluded; every man should obey, that they might be delivered.

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: yea shall take it from the sheep or from the goats". Accordingly, the Israelites were not free to choose the type, for God had outlined the desired sacrifice. The picture must be exact. The animal was to be young, perfect, a male.—Exo. 12:5.

Again the time element enters into the pass-

over program. "Ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (between the two evenings).—Exo. 12:6.

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the side posts and on the upper doors of the houses, wherein they eat it". Here the blood of the sacrificed lamb is applied as a sign which brings deliverance. The flesh is eaten, and strength obtained therefrom.—Exo. 12:7. "They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs shall they eat it". "It is the Lord's passover".—Exo. 12:8-11.

We have now learned the Lord's outlined plan of procedure which the children of Israel were to follow to gain deliverance from the destroying angel, which would punish the Egyptian. God called for a lamb, a male, a perfect creature. Each family of God's people was to select its sacrifice. It was to be slain upon the fourteenth day of the first month, between the two evenings; and its blood applied to the door posts, and its flesh eaten upon the same night. God was definite. He left nothing for conjecture. His program was perfect.

Upon the obedience of Israel, on that certain specified day in Egypt, depended the salvation of the firstborn among God's people. If they obeyed, the firstborn would be spared; if they neglected to obey, the firstborn were destroyed; for, said Jehovah, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite 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. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood I will pass over, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt".—Exo. 12:12, 13.

True to the warning and promise given by Jehovah, upon the fourteenth, during the night, the destroying angel passed throughout the land of Egypt. When the blood was seen upon the posts and the lintel of the doors of the houses in which the Israelites dwelt, the angel passed over those homes, and the firstborn were not slain.

But among the Egyptians conditions were reversed. Where the blood was not found, God's wrath was apparent: for "it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon. . . . There was not a house where there was not one dead"—Exo. 12:29, 30.

Thereafter, this certain day, the fourteenth day of the first month, by the word of God, was to be a memorial day, a day for the bringing to mind of the mercy and lovingkindness of Jehovah in passing over His obedient children and sparing their firstborn in the night that the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. The Lord commanded, saying, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever."—Exo. 12:14.

According to the ancient reckoning, the new

moon nearest the vernal equinox, the time when days and nights are equal in the springtime, marks the first day of the Bible year. It shall be the first day of the "first month of the year to you".—Exo. 12:2; Brit. Ency.

Counting fourteen days, including this first day, upon which the moon entered its new phase, providing that eighteen hours of the day have not elapsed before the moon became new, we locate the fourteenth day of the first month. Upon this day, according to the word of God, between the evenings, the passover lamb is to be slain, and its blood applied, and its flesh eaten, upon the night of that same day. This then is the Lord's passover.

No other day may be observed thereafter, even forever; for the Lord has so commanded, saying, "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread". "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever".—Ex. 12:18, 14.

Again in Leviticus, the Lord has again repeated the charge, saying, "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover". After sunset of the fourteenth day, "on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD".—Lev. 23:5, 6.

God's people obeyed Him, and we find them closely following the instructions He gave them,

and celebrating the passover memorial on the fourteenth day, immediately after they had crossed the river Jordan, where they "encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho".—Joshua 5:10.

While the Israelites were in captivity at Babylon, they ceased not to recall their deliverance at passover in Egypt. We read they kept the memorial at its appointed season, and upon the correct date. "The children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month".—Ezra 6:19.

Since Jehovah has said that the fourteenth day should continue to be observed as a memorial of the passing over of the destroying angel, even throughout all generations of Israel, it was natural that Jesus the Christ, born of Mary the Israelite, would also be found observing the memorial in its appointed season and upon the day assigned.

Thus, upon the fourteenth day, which Jehovah calls His passover, (Exo. 12:11, 27) we read that Jesus observed the memorial: "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover". . . . "When the passover must be killed" . . . "and when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him", "and he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" Luke 22:1, 7, 14, 15.

Here then we have learned that Jesus, upon the day the lamb must be killed, that is, the four-

teenth, sat down with his disciples to eat the passover as His Father had commanded. It was not a day early, neither was it a day late, but upon the day, and when the hour had even come. Truly was the Son obedient unto the will of His Father!

Since God hath said that this date, the fourteenth, shall continue to be observed throughout all generations of Israel, even forever, is it possible that Jesus abolished this memorial, or even changed the date? What think you? Do the actions and words of Jesus abolish, or rather stamp His approval upon God's passover? Can words be more clearly expressed to show the continuation of this great memorial of God, than the promise of Jesus unto His disciples when He said: "I say unto you, I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom"?—Matt. 26:29.

Here then is a definite prophecy stating that the observance of the Lord's passover would continue until at last, in the kingdom of God, Jesus would partake again with his beloved disciples. This agrees with the words of the Lord, as spoken by the prophet Ezekiel, who foretold that the passover would continue to be observed even in the kingdom age to come, saying, "In the first month, **in the fourteenth day** of the month, ye shall have the passover".—Ezek. 45:21.

As the memorial was to be observed throughout all generations of Israel, even forever, and as Jesus promised that he would eat it again in the coming kingdom age, and Ezekiel likewise bare

record of its observance then; is it possible that during the gospel age the passover was not to be kept in its season, upon its day, according to its rites and ordinance?—Num. 9:2, 3; Exo. 12:14, 24.

On the contrary, we learn that the early Church of God continued to partake of the passover feast, in its season and according to its specified rites. According to the record in The Acts, we understand that there was to be the passover feast in Jerusalem, and it was to be at its appointed season. The apostle Paul hastened away from Ephesus that he might reach Jerusalem in time for the feast. In bidding farewell to the Church of God at Ephesus, the apostle said, "I must by all means keep this feast (Luke 22:1) that cometh in Jerusalem".—Acts 18:21.

Since we have learned that the apostle to the Gentiles, even Paul, was anxious to observe the feast at Jerusalem, and as reliable history bears record that the ancient passover date has ever been kept by some of God's faithful people, how then is the Church of God to observe the passover supper in our day? What are its ordinances and ceremonies for you and me?

In order to understand our duties in regard to the observance of the Lord's passover, we must learn the attitude of Jesus in regard to it, and His instructions relating thereto; for we are to follow Jesus, that we might not walk in darkness. (John 8:12; 1 Cor. 11:1) and take heed unto His words, for they are life. (John 6:63.)

By Moses, the prophet of God, the leader of the children of Israel, the Lord prophesied, saying, "I

will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I command him".—Deut. 18:18; Acts 3:22, 23.

In due time that prophet came, even Christ Jesus who spake not of Himself, but as the Lord God commanded, saying, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak".—John 12:48-50.

Just as Israel hearkened unto the word of the Lord by the mouth of Moses, let us, therefore, take heed unto Him that came as Moses prophesied, to whom we are to give obedience. What was the attitude and teaching of Jesus in regard to the passover of the Lord, in His example and in His doctrine?

When "came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed", Jesus sent forth His disciples, saying, "Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat". Thus, Jesus knew the time of the passover, and was in obedience to His Father's will. After the passover had been prepared, the hour had come, and He had sat down with His disciples, He said unto them: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer".—Luk. 22:7, 8, 14, 15.

During supper, Jesus took the bread, (unleavened, see Exo. 12:8) offered thanks, and gave of the broken loaf to His disciples, saying, "Take eat: this is my body". "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me".—Matt. 26:26; Luk. 22:19.

Likewise also the cup after supper he took, and after offering thanks, gave it unto the disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins".—Matt. 26:27, 28.

Afterwards Jesus arose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded", teaching the great lesson of humiliaton and service, saying unto them: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye 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 ye if you do them".—John 13:4-17.

"And when they had sung an hymn, (or, psalm) they went out into the mount of Olives".—Matt. 26:30.

Here then we have learned, both by precept and example, how the Lord Jesus desires the passover supper kept throughout the gospel age, even until the day when He partakes of it again with His dis-

ciples in the kingdom of His Father.

Nothing is omitted. Jesus has made His Father's will concerning the feast as explicit as Moses had to Israel in the land of Egypt. The time is declared to be the day when the passover lamb should be killed, (Luke 22:7) that is upon Nisan fourteenth. (Exodus 12:18.) The period of the day, "when the hour was come", (Luke 22:14) was at even. (Exo. 12:8) "when the sun did set". (Mark 1:32.) The sacrifice, the lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, whose flesh was represented by the unleavened bread, (Matt. 26:26; Isa. 53:7; 1 Pt. 1:19; 1 Cor. 5:7) and whose spilled blood was typified by the fruit of the vine. (Matt. 26:28.)

The true significance of our passover is then explained by the apostle Paul, of the "stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews", (Phil. 3:5) who said: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth".—1 Cor. 5:7, 8.

As, in the passover in Egypt, the Israelites were to select a young male lamb, without blemish, so is our passover the lamb of God, Christ Jesus, a male, young, perfect; "and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him".—Heb. 5:9. Christ then is our passover, and the unleavened bread is to us his flesh, and the wine his blood, which has been

given for our deliverance, if we but trust in Him and obey.

As Israel obeyed Jehovah God, and, in after years, kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month at even, according to the prescribed ordinances and ceremonies, it was a memorial in remembrance of the passing over of the destroying angel, who spared those, who through faith, offered the pascal lamb in the land of Egypt.

In like manner, when the children of God, in this age, observe the Lord's supper, our passover, in its season, after its rites and ordinances, it recalls to mind the sacrifice of our passover, the lamb of God, who was slain for our deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. He is our passover; therefore we keep the feast.

We keep the Lord's Supper in memorial of our passover in its season; for it was to be observed throughout all generations, even forever; hence, it has never ended. (Num. 9:2, 3; Exo. 12:14, 24.) We celebrate it upon the memorial day, the fourteenth of the first month, the day that Israel's lamb was slain and the firstborn delivered, and the day our passover, even Christ, was sacrificed and we ourselves delivered. We follow Jesus and observe it upon the day that he ate it with His disciples, and commanded that we should do it in remembrance of Him, promising them that He would partake again with them in the kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul explains concerning the Lord's Supper, stating that it was the memorial of the death of Christ, God's passover lamb, saying, "I

among you was believed) in that day"—2 Thes. 1: 7-10.

Do you desire to live in that day, dear reader? Would you gain eternal life. Believe then on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved. Claim the lamb which God has provided even the Son of God, our passover. Fail not to partake of His flesh and blood that ye may live. His promises are sure: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day".—John 6:53, 54.

Remember the warning of the Lord! Fail not to keep His memorial, and do it worthily, discerning the Lord's body; for his flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. The Christ, our passover, has been slain for us; therefore, let us keep the feast, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, to show forth his death till He come. Amen!

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