

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

by

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Exodus 12

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether” (Exodus 11:1). One more heavy blow must fall upon this hard-hearted monarch and his land, ere he will be compelled to let go the favoured objects of the Lord’s sovereign grace.

How utterly vain it is for man to harden and exalt himself against God; for, truly, He can grind to powder the hardest heart, and bring down to the dust the haughtiest spirit. **“Those that walk in pride he is able to abase”** (Daniel 4:37).

Man may fancy himself to be something; he may lift up his head, in pomp and vain glory, as though he were his own master. Vain man how little he knows of his real condition and character. He is but the tool of Satan, taken up and used by him, in his malignant efforts to counteract the purposes of God. The most splendid intellect, the most commanding genius, the most indomitable energy, if not under the direct control of the Spirit of God, are but so many instruments in Satan’s hand to carry forward his dark designs. No man is his own master; he is either governed by Christ or governed by Satan. The king of Egypt might fancy himself to be a free agent, yet was he but a tool in the hands of another. Satan was behind the throne; and, as the result of Pharaoh’s having set himself to resist the purposes of God, he was judicially handed over to the blinding and hardening influence of his self-chosen master.

This will explain to us an expression occurring very frequently throughout the earlier chapters of this book. **“The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart.”**

There is no need, whatever, for any one to seek to avoid the full, plain sense of this most solemn statement. *If man resists the light of divine testimony, he is shut up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart.* God leaves him to himself, and then Satan comes in and carries him headlong to perdition. There was abundant light for Pharaoh, to show him the extravagant folly of his course in seeking to detain those whom God had commanded him to let go. But the real disposition of his heart was to act against God, and therefore God left him to himself, and made him a monument for the display of His glory **“through all the earth.”**

There is no difficulty in this to any, save those whose desire is to argue against God - **“to rush upon the thick bosses of the shield of the Almighty”** - to ruin their own immortal souls. God gives people, at times, according to the real bent of their hearts’ desire. “. . . **because of this, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness**” (II Thessalonians 2:11, 12).

- If men will not have the truth when it is put before them, they shall, assuredly, have a lie.
- If they will not have Christ, they shall have Satan;
- If they will not have Heaven, they shall have hell. *

Will the infidel mind find fault with this? Ere it does so, let it prove that all who are thus judicially dealt with have fully answered their responsibilities. Let it, for instance, prove, in Pharaoh’s case, that he acted, in any measure, up to the light he possessed. The same is to be proved in every case.

*** There is a vast difference between the divine method of dealing with the heathen (Romans 1) and with the rejecters of the Gospel. (II Thessalonians 1, 2). In reference to the former, we read, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind:” but with respect to the latter the word is “because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, . . . God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned.” The heathen refuse the testimony of creation, and are, therefore, left to themselves. The rejecters of the Gospel refuse the full blaze of light which shines from the Cross, and, therefore, “a strong delusion” will, ere long, be sent from God upon them. This is deeply solemn for an age like this, in the which there is so much light and so much profession.**

Unquestionably, the task of proving rests on those who are disposed to quarrel with God’s mode of dealing with the rejecters of His truth. The simple-hearted child of God will justify Him, in view of the most inscrutable dispensations; and even if he cannot meet and satisfactorily solve the difficult questions of a skeptical mind, he can rest perfectly satisfied with this word, **“shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”** There is far more wisdom in this method of settling an apparent difficulty, than in the most elaborate argument; for it is perfectly certain that: the heart which is in a condition to reply against God, will not be convinced by the arguments of man.

However, it is God’s prerogative to answer all the proud reasonings, and bring down the lofty imaginations of the human mind. He can write the sentence of death upon nature, in its fairest forms. **“It is appointed unto men once to die.”** This cannot be avoided. Man may seek to hide his humiliation in various ways to cover his retreat through the valley of death, in the most heroic manner possible; to call the last humiliating stage of his career by the most honourable titles he can devise; to gild the bed of death with a false light; to adorn the funeral procession and the grave with the appearance of pomp, pageantry, and glory; to arise above the mouldering ashes a splendid monument, on which are engraven the records of human shame. all these things he may do; but death is death after all, and he cannot keep it off for a moment, or make it ought else than what it is, namely, “the ravages of sin.”

The foregoing thoughts are suggested by the opening verse of Exodus 11. **“One plague more!”** Solemn word!

It signed the death-warrant of Egypt’s firstborn - **“the chief of all their strength.”**

“And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more” (Exodus 11:4-6).

This was to be the final plague - death in every house. **“But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.”** It is the Lord alone who can **“put a difference”** between those who are His and those who are not.

It is not our province to say to any one, **“stand by thyself, . . . I am holier than thou:”** this is the language of a Pharisee. But when God puts a difference we are bound to enquire what that difference is; and, in the case before us, we see it to be a simple question of life or death. This is God’s grand **“difference.”** He draws a line of demarcation, and on one side of this line is **“life,”** on the other **“death.”**

Many of Egypt’s firstborn might have been as fair and attractive as those of Israel, and much more so; but Israel had life and light, founded upon God’s counsels of redeeming love, established, as we shall see presently, by the blood of the lamb. This was Israel’s happy position; while, on the other hand, throughout the length and breadth of the land of Egypt, from the monarch on the throne to the menial behind the mill, nothing was to be seen but death; nothing to be heard but the cry of bitter anguish, elicited by the heavy stroke of the Lord’s rod.

God can bring down the haughty spirit of man. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrain the remainder. **“And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves-unto me, saying, Get thee out and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out.”**

God will accomplish His own ends. His schemes of mercy must be carried out at all cost, and confusion of face must be the portion of all who stand in the way.

“O! give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for His mercy endureth for ever . . . To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy endureth for ever: and brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth for ever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm; for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 136)

“And the Lord spake unto 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” (Exodus 12:1, 2).

There is, here, a very interesting change in the order of time. The common or civil year was rolling on in its ordinary course, when the Lord interrupted it in reference to His people, and thus, in principle, taught them that they were to begin a new era in company with Him. Their previous history was, henceforth, to be regarded as a blank. Redemption was to constitute the first step in real life.

This teaches a plain truth.

A man's life is really of no account until he begins to walk with God, in the knowledge of full salvation and settled peace, through the precious Blood of the Lamb.

Previous to this he is, in the judgment of God, and in the language of scripture, "**dead in trespasses and sins;**" "**alienated from the life of God.**" His whole history is a complete blank, even though, in man's account, it may have been one uninterrupted scene of bustling activity. All that which engages the attention of the man of this world, the honours, the riches, the pleasures, the attractions, of life, so called - all, when examined in the light of the judgment of God, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, must be accounted as a dismal blank, a worthless void, utterly unworthy of a place in the records of the Holy Ghost. "**He that believeth not the Son shall not see life**" (John 3:36). Men speak of "seeing life," when they launch forth into society, travel hither and thither, and see all that is to be seen; but they forget that the only true, the only real, the only divine way to "see life," is to "**believe on the Son of God.**"

How little do men think of this! They imagine that "real life" is at an end when a man becomes a Christian, in truth and reality, not merely in name and outward profession; whereas God's word teaches us that it is only then we can see life and taste true happiness. "**He that hath the Son hath life**" (I John 5:12).

And, again, "**Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered**" (Psalm 32:1).

We can get life and happiness only in Christ. Apart from Him, all is death and misery, in Heaven's judgment, whatever the outward appearance may be. It is when the thick veil of unbelief is removed from the heart, and we are enabled to behold, with the eye of faith, the bleeding Lamb, bearing our heavy burden of guilt upon the cursed tree, that we enter upon the path of life, and partake of the cup of divine happiness - a life which begins at the Cross, and flows onward into an eternity of glory - a happiness which, each day, becomes deeper and purer, more connected with God and founded on Christ, until we reach its proper sphere, in the presence of God and the Lamb. To seek life and happiness in any other way, is vainer work by far than seeking to make bricks without straw.

True, the enemy of souls spreads a gilding over this passing scene, in order that men may imagine it to be all gold. He sets up many a puppet-show to elicit the hollow laugh from a thoughtless multitude, who will not remember that it is Satan who is in the box, and that his object is to keep them from Christ, and drag them down into eternal perdition.

There is nothing real, nothing solid, nothing satisfying, but in Christ. Outside of Him, **“all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”** In Him alone true and eternal joys are to be found; and we only begin to live when we begin to live in, live on, live with, and live for Him. **“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”** The time spent in the brick-kilns and by the flesh-pots must be ignored. It is, henceforth, to be of no account save that the remembrance thereof should, ever and anon, serve to quicken and deepen their sense of what divine grace had accomplished on their behalf.

“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 an house . . . Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats: and 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.”

Here we have the redemption of the people founded upon the blood of the lamb, in pursuance of God's eternal purpose.

This imparts to it all its divine stability. Redemption was no after-thought with God. Before the world was, or Satan, or sin - before ever the voice of God was heard breaking the silence of eternity, and calling worlds into existence, He had His deep counsels of love; and these counsels could never find a sufficiently solid basis in creation. All the blessings, the privileges, and the dignities of creation were founded upon a creature's obedience, and the moment that failed, all was gone. But, then, Satan's attempt to mar creation only opened the way for the manifestation of God's deeper purposes of redemption. This beautiful truth is typically presented to us in the circumstance of the lamb's being **“kept up”** from the **“tenth”** to **“the fourteenth day.”** That this lamb pointed to Christ is unquestionable. I Corinthians 5:7, settles the application of this interesting type beyond all question; **“for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”**

We have, in the first Epistle of Peter, an allusion to the keeping up of the lamb: **“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. (Exodus 1:18-20).**

All God's purposes, from everlasting, had reference to Christ; and no effort of the enemy could possibly interfere with those counsels: yea, his efforts only tended to the display of the unfathomable wisdom and immovable stability thereof. If the **“Lamb without blemish and without spot”** was **“foreordained before the foundation of the world,”** then, assuredly, redemption must have been in the mind of God before the foundation of the world.

The Blessed One had not to pause in order to devise some plan to remedy the terrible evil which the enemy had introduced into His fair creation. No, He had only to bring forth, from the unexplored treasury of His precious counsels, the truth concerning the spotless Lamb, who was foreordained from everlasting, and to be **“manifest in these last times for us.”**

There was no need for the Blood of the Lamb in creation, as it came fresh from the hand of the Creator, exhibiting in every stage, and every department of it, the beautiful impress of His hand - **“the infallible proofs”** of **“His eternal power and Godhead”** (Romans 1).

But when, **“by one man,”** sin was introduced into the world, then came out the higher, richer, fuller, deeper thought of redemption by the Blood of the Lamb. This glorious truth first broke through the thick clouds which surrounded our first parents, as they retreated from the garden of Eden; its glimmerings appear in the types and shadows of the Mosaic economy; it burst upon the world in full brightness, when **“the dayspring from on high”** appeared in the Person of **“God manifest in the flesh;”** and its rich and rare results will be realized when the white-robed, palm-bearing multitude shall cluster round the throne of God and the Lamb, and the whole creation shall rest beneath the peaceful sceptre of the Son of David.

Now, the lamb taken on the tenth day, and kept up until the fourteenth day, shows us Christ foreordained of God, from eternity, but manifest for us, in time.

God’s eternal purpose in Christ becomes the foundation of the believer’s peace. Nothing short of this would do. We are carried back far beyond creation, beyond the bounds of time, beyond the entrance in of sin, and everything that could possibly affect the ground-work of our peace. The expression, **“foreordained before the foundation of the world,”** conducts us back into the unfathomed depths of eternity, and shows us God forming His own counsels of redeeming love, and basing them all upon the atoning blood of His own precious, spotless Lamb.

Christ was ever the primary thought in the divine mind; and, hence, the moment He began to speak or act, He took occasion to shadow forth that One who occupied the highest place in His counsels and affections; and, as we pass along the current of inspiration, we find that every ceremony, every rite, every ordinance, and every sacrifice pointed forward to **“the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,”** and not one more strikingly than the Passover. The paschal lamb, with all the attendant circumstances, forms one of the most profoundly interesting and deeply instructive types of Scripture.

*In the interpretation of Exodus 12 we have to do with one assembly and one sacrifice. **“The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening”** (Ver. 6).*

It is not so much a number of families with several lambs - a thing quite true in itself - as one assembly and one lamb. Each house was but the local expression of the whole assembly gathered round the lamb. The antitype of this we have in the whole Church of God, gathered by the Holy Ghost, in the name of Jesus, of which each separate assembly, wherever convened, should be the local expression.

“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door posts of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof” (Ver. 7-9).

The blood of the lamb and the Word of the Lord formed the foundation of Israel's peace on that terrible night in which Egypt's firstborn were laid low. If an hair of an Israelite's head could be touched, it would have proved the Lord's Word void, and the blood of the lamb valueless.

It is most needful to be simple and clear as to what constitutes the ground of a sinner's peace, in the presence of God.

So many things are mixed up with the finished work of Christ, that souls are plunged into darkness and uncertainty, as to their acceptance. They do not see the absolutely-settled character of redemption through the Blood of Christ, in its application to themselves. They seem not to be aware that full forgiveness of sins rests upon the simple fact that a full atonement has been offered - a fact attested in the view of all created intelligence, by the resurrection of the sinner's Surety from the dead. They know that there is no other way of being saved but by the blood of the Cross - but the devils know this, yet it avails them nought. What is so much needed is to know that we are saved.

The Israelite not merely knew that there was safety in the blood; he knew that he was safe. And why safe? Was it because of anything that he had done, or felt, or thought? By no means, but because God had said, "**when I see the blood I will pass over you.**" He rested upon God's testimony. He believed what God said, because God said it. "**He set to his seal that God was true.**"

And, observe, my reader, it was not upon his own thoughts, feelings, or experiences, respecting the blood, that the Israelite rested. This would have been a poor sandy foundation to rest upon. His thoughts and feelings might be deep or they might be shallow; but deep or shallow, they had nothing to do with the ground of his peace.

It was not said, "*when you see the blood, and value it as you ought, I will pass over you.*" This would have been sufficient to plunge him in dark despair about himself, inasmuch as it was quite impossible that the human mind could ever sufficiently appreciate the precious Blood of the Lamb. What gave peace was the fact that the Lord's eye rested upon the blood, and that He knew its worth. This tranquillized the heart. The blood was outside, and the Israelite inside, so that he could not possibly see it; but God saw it, and that was quite enough.

The application of this to the question of a sinner's peace is very plain.

The Lord Jesus Christ, having shed His precious Blood, as a perfect atonement for sin, has taken it into the presence of God, and sprinkled it there; and God's testimony assures the believing sinner, that everything is settled on his behalf - settled not by his estimate of the Blood, but by the Blood itself which God estimates so highly, that because of it, without a single jot or tittle added thereto, He can righteously forgive all sin, and accept the sinner as perfectly righteous in Christ.

How can any one ever enjoy settled peace, if his peace depends upon his estimate of the blood? Impossible.

The loftiest estimate which the human mind can form of the blood must fall infinitely short of its divine preciousness; and, therefore, if our peace were to depend upon our valuing it as we ought, we could no more enjoy settled peace than if we were seeking it by “**works of law.**” There must either be a sufficient ground of peace in the Blood alone, or we can never have peace. To mix up our estimate with it, is to upset the entire fabric of Christianity, just as effectually as if we were to conduct the sinner to the foot of mount Sinai, and put him under a covenant of works. Either Christ’s atoning sacrifice is sufficient or it is not. If it is sufficient, why those doubts and fears? The words of our lips profess that the work is finished; but the doubts and fears of the heart declare that it is not. Every one who doubts his full and everlasting forgiveness, denies, so far as he is concerned, the completeness of the sacrifice of Christ.

But there are very many who would shrink from the idea of deliberately and avowedly calling in question the efficacy of the Blood of Christ, who, nevertheless, have not settled peace.

Such persons profess to be quite assured of the sufficiency of the Blood, if only they were sure of an interest therein - if only they had the right kind of faith. There are many precious souls in this unhappy condition. They are occupied with their interest and their faith, instead of with Christ’s Blood, and God’s Word.

In other words, they are looking in at self, instead of out at Christ. This is not faith; and, as a consequence, they have not peace. An Israelite within the blood-stained lintel could teach such souls a most seasonable lesson. He was not saved by his interest in, or his thoughts about, the blood, but simply by the blood. No doubt, he had a blessed interest in it; and he would have his thoughts, likewise; but, then, God did not say, “When I see your interest in the blood, I will pass over you.” Oh! no; THE BLOOD, in all its solitary dignity and divine efficacy, was set before Israel; and had they attempted to place even a morsel of unleavened bread beside the blood, as a ground of security: they would have made the Lord a liar, and denied the sufficiency of His remedy.

We are ever prone to look at something in or connected with ourselves as necessary, in order to make up, with the Blood of Christ, the groundwork of our peace.

There is a sad lack of clearness and soundness on this vital point, as is evident from the doubts and fears with which so many of the people of God are afflicted. We are apt to regard the fruits of the Spirit in us, rather than the work of Christ for us, as the foundation of peace. We shall see, presently, the place which the work of the Holy Spirit occupies in Christianity; but it is never set forth in Scripture as being that on which our peace reposes. The Holy Ghost did not make peace, but Christ did. The Holy Ghost is not said to be our peace, but Christ is. God did not send preaching peace by the Holy Ghost, but by Jesus Christ. (Compare Acts 10:36; Ephesians 2:14, 17; Colossians 1:20).

My reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this important distinction.

It is the Blood of Christ which:

- Gives peace,

- Imparts perfect justification,
- Grants divine righteousness,
- Purges the conscience,
- Brings us into the holiest of all,
- Justifies God in receiving the believing sinner, and
- Constitutes our title to all the joys, the dignities, and the glories of Heaven.

(See Romans 3:24-28; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 2:13-18; Colossians 1:20-22; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:19; I Peter 1:19; I Peter 2:24; I John 1:7; Revelation 7:14-17).

We have to contemplate the paschal lamb in two aspects, namely, as the ground of peace and the center of unity.

The blood on the lintel secured Israel's peace. "**When I see the blood, I will pass over you**" (Ver. 13). There was nothing more required, in order to enjoy settled peace, in reference to the destroying angel, than the application of the blood of sprinkling. Death had to do its work in every house throughout the land of Egypt.

"**It is appointed unto men once to die.**" But God, in His great mercy, found an unblemished substitute for Israel on which the sentence of death was executed. Thus God's claims and Israel's need were met by one and the same thing, namely, the Blood of the lamb. That blood outside proved that all was perfectly, because divinely, settled; and therefore perfect peace reigned within. A shade of doubt in the bosom of an Israelite, would have been a dishonour offered to the divinely-appointed ground of peace - the blood of atonement.

True it is that each one within the blood-sprinkled door would, necessarily, feel that were he to receive his due reward, the sword of the destroyer should, most assuredly, find its object in him; but then the lamb was treated in his stead. This was the solid foundation of his peace. The judgment that was due to him fell upon a divinely-appointed victim; and believing this, he could feed in peace within.

A single doubt would have made the Lord a liar; for He had said, "**when I see the blood, I will pass over you.**" This was enough. It was no question of personal worthiness.

Self had nothing whatever to do in the matter.

- all under the cover of the blood were safe.
- they were not merely in a saveable state, they were saved.
- they were not hoping or praying to be saved, they knew it as an assured fact, on the authority of that Word which shall endure throughout all generations.
- moreover, they were not partly saved and partly exposed to judgment; they were wholly saved.

It will not, I fondly hope, be supposed that, in seeking to put "**the precious blood of Christ**" in its divinely-appointed place, I would write a single line which might seem to detract from the value of the Spirit's operations. God forbid.

The Holy Ghost reveals Christ:

- Makes us to know, enjoy, and feed upon Christ;
- He bears witness to Christ;
- He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us.
- He is the power of communion, the seal, the witness, the earnest, the unction.

In short, His blessed operations are absolutely essential. Without Him, we can neither see, hear, know, feel, experience, enjoy, nor exhibit ought of Christ. This is plain. The doctrine of the Spirit's operations is clearly laid down in the word, and is understood and admitted by every true and rightly instructed Christian.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, the work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace; for, if it were, we could not have settled peace until Christ's coming, inasmuch as the work of the Spirit, in the Church, will not, properly speaking, be complete till then. He still carries on His work in the believer. "**He maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered**" (Romans 8). He labours to bring us up to the predestinated standard, namely, perfect conformity, in all things, to the image of "**the Son.**" He is the sole Author of every right desire, every holy aspiration, every pure affection, every divine experience, every sound conviction; but, clearly, His work in us will not be complete until we have left this present scene and taken our place with Christ in the glory. Just as, in the case of Abraham's servant, his work was not complete, in the matter of Rebecca, until he had presented her to Isaac.

Not so the work of Christ FOR us. That is absolutely and eternally complete. He could say, "**I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do**" (John 17:4). And, again, "**It is finished**" (John 19:30).

The Holy Ghost cannot yet say He has finished His work. *As the true Vicar of Christ upon earth,* He still labours amid the varied hostile influences which surround the sphere of His operations. He works in the hearts of the people of God to bring them up, practically and experimentally, to the divinely-appointed standard. But He never teaches a soul to lean on His work for peace in the presence of God. His office is to speak of Jesus. "**He,**" says Christ, "**shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you**" (John 16:13, 14).

If, then, it is only by the Spirit's teaching that any one can understand the true ground of peace, it is obvious that He can only present Christ's work as the foundation on which the soul must rest for ever; yea, it is in virtue of that work that He takes up His abode and carries on His marvellous operations in the believer. He is not our title, though He reveals that title and enables us to understand and enjoy it.

Hence, therefore, the paschal lamb, as the ground of Israel's peace, is a marked and beautiful type of Christ as the ground of the believer's peace.

There was nothing to be added to the blood on the lintel; neither is there anything to be added to the Blood on the mercy-seat. The "**unleavened bread**" and "**bitter herbs**" were necessary, but not as forming, either in whole or in part, the ground of peace.

They were for the inside of the house and formed the characteristics of the communion there; but **THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB WAS THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING.** It saved them from death and introduced them into a scene of life, light, and peace.' It formed the link between God and His redeemed people. As a people linked with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, it was their high privilege to meet certain responsibilities; but these responsibilities did not form the link, but merely flowed out of it.

And I would further remind my reader that the obedient life of Christ is not set forth in Scripture as the procuring cause of our forgiveness. It was His death upon the Cross that opened those everlasting floodgates of love which else should have remained pent up for ever. If he had remained to this very hour, going through the cities of Israel, "**doing good,**" the veil of the temple would continue unrent, to bar the worshipper's approach to God.

It was His death that rent that mysterious curtain "**from top to bottom.**" It is "**by His stripes,**" not by His obedient life, that "**we are healed;**" and those "**stripes**" He endured on the Cross, and nowhere else.

His own words, during the progress of His blessed life, are quite sufficient to settle this point. "**I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished**" (Luke 12:50).

To what does this refer but to His death upon the Cross, which was the accomplishment of His baptism and the opening up of a righteous vent through which His love might freely flow out to the guilty sons of Adam? Again, He says, "**except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone**" (John 12:24). He was that precious "**corn of wheat,**" and He should have remained for ever "**alone,**" even though incarnate, had He not, by His death upon the accursed tree, removed out of the way everything that could have hindered the union of his people with Him in resurrection. "**If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.**"

My reader cannot too carefully ponder this subject. It is one of immense weight and importance. He has to remember two points in reference to this entire question, namely, that there could be no union with Christ, save in resurrection; and that Christ only suffered for sins on the Cross. We are not to suppose that incarnation was, by any means, Christ taking us into union with Himself. This could not be. How could sinful flesh be thus united? The body of sin had to be destroyed by death. Sin had to be put away, according to the divine requirement; all the power of the enemy had to be abolished. How was all this to be done? Only by the precious, spotless Lamb of God submitting to the death of the Cross. "**It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings**" (Hebrews 2:10). "**Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected**" (Luke 13:32). The expressions "**perfect**" and "**perfected**" in the above passages do not refer to Christ in His own Person abstractedly, for He was perfect from all eternity, as Son of God; and as to His humanity, He was absolutely perfect likewise. But then, as "**the captain of salvation**" - as "**bringing many sons unto glory**" - as "**bringing forth much fruit**" - as associating redeemed people with Himself, He had to reach "**the third day**" in order to be "**perfected.**"

He went down alone into the “**horrible pit, and miry clay;**” but, directly He plants His “**foot on the rock**” of resurrection. He associates with Himself the “**many sons**” (Psalm 40: 1-3). He fought the fight alone; but, as the mighty Conqueror, He scatters around Him, in rich profusion, the spoils of victory, that we might gather them up and enjoy them for ever.

Moreover, we are not to regard the Cross of Christ as a mere circumstance in a life of sin-bearing. It was the grand and only scene of sin-bearing. “**His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree**” (I Peter 2:14). He did not bear them anywhere else. He did not bear them in the manger, nor in the wilderness, nor in the garden; but ONLY “**ON THE TREE.**” He never had ought to say to sin, save on the Cross; and there He bowed His blessed head, and yielded up His precious life, under the accumulated weight of His people’s sins. Neither did He ever suffer at the hand of God save on the Cross; and there the Lord hid His face from Him because He was “**made sin**” (II Corinthians 5).

The above train of thought, and the various passages of scripture referred to, may, perhaps, enable my reader to enter more fully into the divine power of the words, “**When I see The blood I will pass over you.**”

The lamb needed to be without blemish, no doubt, for what else could meet the holy eye of the Lord? But, had the Blood not been shed, there could have been no passing over, for “**without shedding of blood is no remission**” (Hebrews 9:22). This subject will, the Lord permitting, come more fully and appropriately before us in the types of Leviticus. It demands the prayerful attention of every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

We shall now consider the second aspect of the Passover, as the center round which the assembly was gathered, in peaceful, holy, happy fellowship. Israel, saved by the blood, was one thing; and Israel, feeding on the lamb, was quite another.

They were saved only by the blood; but the object round which they were gathered was, manifestly, the roasted lamb. This is not, by any means, a distinction without a difference.

The Blood of the Lamb forms the foundation both of our connection with God, and our connection with one another. It is as those who are washed in that Blood, that we are introduced to God and to one another.

Apart from the perfect atonement of Christ, there could obviously be no fellowship either with God or His assembly. Still we must remember that it is to a living Christ in Heaven that believers are gathered by the Holy Ghost. It is with a living Head we are connected - to “**a living stone**” - we have come. He is our center. Having found peace, through His blood, we own Him as our grand gathering point and connecting link. “**Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them**” (Matthew 18:20).

The Holy Ghost is the only Gatherer; Christ Himself is the only object to which we are gathered; and our assembly, when thus convened, is to be characterized by holiness, so that the Lord our God may dwell among us.

The Holy Ghost can only gather to Christ. He cannot gather to a system, a name, a doctrine, or an ordinance. He gathers to a Person, and that Person is a glorified Christ in Heaven. This must stamp a peculiar character on God's assembly. Men may associate, on any ground, round any center, or for any object they please; but, when the Holy Ghost associates, it is on the ground of accomplished redemption, around the Person of Christ, in order to form a holy dwelling place for God (I Corinthians 3:16, 17; I Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 2:21, 22; I Peter 2:4, 5).

We shall now look in detail at the principles brought before us in the paschal feast. The assembly of Israel, as under the cover of the blood, was to be ordered by the Lord in a manner worthy of Himself. In the matter of safety from judgment, as we have already seen, nothing was needed but the blood; but in the fellowship which flowed out of this safety, other things were needed which could not be neglected with impunity.

And first, then, we read, **“They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof”** (Ver. 8, 9).

The lamb, round which the congregation was assembled, and on which it feasted, was a roasted lamb - a lamb which had undergone the action of fire. In this we see **“Christ our Passover”** presenting Himself to the action of the fire of divine holiness and judgment which found in Him a perfect material. He could say, **“Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress”** (Psalm 17:3).

All in Him was perfect. The fire tried Him and there was no dross. **“His head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.”** That is to say, the seat of His understanding; His outward, walk with all that pertained thereto - all was submitted to the action of the fire, and all was entirely perfect. The process of roasting was therefore deeply significant, as is every circumstance in the ordinances of God. Nothing should be passed over, because all is pregnant with meaning.

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water.” Had it been eaten thus, there would have been no expression of the great truth which it was the divine purpose to shadow forth; namely, that our paschal Lamb was to endure, on the Cross, the fire of the Lord's righteous wrath - a truth of infinite preciousness to the soul.

We are not merely under the eternal shelter of the Blood of the Lamb, but we feed, by faith, upon the Person of the Lamb.

Many of us come short here. We are apt to rest satisfied with being saved by what Christ has done for us, without cultivating holy communion with Himself. His loving heart could never be satisfied with this. He has brought us nigh to Himself, that we might enjoy Him, that we might feed on Him, and delight in Him. He presents Himself to us as the One who has endured, to the uttermost, the intense fire of the wrath of God, that He may, in this wondrous character, be the food of our ransomed souls.

But how was this lamb to be eaten? **“With unleavened bread and bitter herbs.”**

Leaven is, invariably, used, throughout scripture, as *emblematical of evil*. Neither in the Old nor in the New Testament is it ever used to set forth anything pure, holy, or good. Thus, in this chapter, **“the feast of unleavened bread”** is the type of that practical separation from evil which is the proper result of being washed from our sins in the Blood of the Lamb, and the proper accompaniment of communion with His sufferings. Nought but perfectly unleavened bread could at all comport with a roasted lamb. A single particle of that which was the marked type of evil, would have destroyed the moral character of the entire ordinance. How could we connect any species of evil with our fellowship with a suffering Christ? Impossible.

All who enter by the power of the Holy Ghost, into the meaning of the Cross will, assuredly, by the same power, put away leaven from all their borders. **“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”** (I Corinthians 5:7, 8).

The feast spoken of in this passage is that which, in the life and conduct of the Church, corresponds with the feast of unleavened bread. This latter lasted **“seven days;”** and the Church collectively, and the believer individually, are called to walk in practical holiness, during the seven days, or entire period, of their course here below; and this, moreover, as the direct result of being washed in the blood, and having communion with the sufferings of Christ.

The Israelite did not put away leaven in order to be saved, but because he was saved; and if he failed to put away leaven, it did not raise the question of security through the blood, but simply of fellowship with the assembly.

“Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land” (Ver. 19).

The cutting off of an Israelite from the congregation answers precisely to the suspension of a Christian’s fellowship, if he be indulging in that which is contrary to the holiness of the divine presence. God cannot tolerate evil. A single unholy thought will interrupt the soul’s communion; and until the soil contracted by any such thought is got rid of by confession, founded on the advocacy of Christ, the communion cannot possibly be restored:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (I John 1:9-10).

The true-hearted Christian rejoices in this. He can ever **“give thanks at the remembrance of God’s holiness.”** He would not, if he could, lower the standard a single hair’s breadth. It is his exceeding joy to walk in company with one who will not go on, for a moment, with a single jot or tittle of leaven.

Blessed be God, we know that nothing can ever snap asunder the link which binds the true believer to Him. We are “**saved in the Lord,**” not with a temporary or conditional, but “**with an everlasting salvation.**” But then *salvation and communion are not the same thing.* Many are saved, who do not know it; and many, also, who do not enjoy it. It is quite impossible that I can enjoy a blood-stained lintel if I have leavened borders. This is an axiom in the divine life. May it be written on our hearts! Practical holiness, though not the basis of our salvation, is intimately connected with our enjoyment thereof. An Israelite was not saved by unleavened bread, but by the blood; and yet leaven would have cut him off from communion. And as to the Christian, he is not saved by his practical holiness, but by the Blood; but if he indulges in evil, in thought, word, or deed, he will have no true enjoyment of salvation, and no true communion with the Person of the Lamb.

This, I cannot doubt, is the secret of much of the spiritual barrenness and lack of settled peace which one finds amongst the children of God. They are not cultivating holiness; they are not keeping “**the feast of unleavened bread.**” The blood is on the lintel, but the leaven within their borders keeps them from enjoying the security which the blood provides. The allowance of evil destroys our fellowship, though it does not break the link which binds our souls eternally to God. Those who belong to God’s assembly must be holy. They have not only been delivered from the guilt and consequences of sin, but - also from the practice of it, the power of it, and the love of it.

The very fact of being delivered by the blood of the paschal lamb, rendered Israel responsible to put away leaven from all their quarters. They could not say, in the frightful language of the antinomian, “now that we are delivered, we may conduct ourselves as we please.” By no means. If they were saved by grace, they were saved to holiness. The soul that can take occasion, from the freedom of divine grace, and the completeness of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, to “**continue in sin,**” proves very distinctly that he understands neither the one nor the other.

Grace not only saves the soul with an everlasting salvation, but also imparts a nature which delights in everything that belongs to God, because it is divine.

We are made partakers of the divine nature, which cannot sin, because it is born of God. To walk in the energy of this nature is, in reality, to keep “**the feast of unleavened bread.**” There is no “**old leaven**” nor “**leaven of malice and wickedness**” in the new nature, because it is of God, and God is holy, and “**God is love.**” Hence it is evident that we do not put away evil from us in order to better our old nature, which is irremediable; nor yet to obtain the new nature, but because we have it. We have life, and, in the power of that life, we put away evil. It is only when we are delivered from the guilt of sin that we can understand or exhibit the true power of holiness. To attempt it in any other way is hopeless labour. The feast of unleavened bread can only be kept beneath the perfect shelter of the blood.

We may perceive equal significance and moral propriety in that which was to accompany the unleavened bread, namely, the “**bitter herbs.**” We cannot enjoy communion with the sufferings of Christ, without remembering what it was which rendered those sufferings needful, and this remembrance must necessarily produce a chastened and subdued tone of spirit, which is aptly expressed by the bitter herbs in the paschal feast. If the roasted lamb expressed Christ’s

endurance of the wrath of God in His own Person, on the Cross, the bitter herbs express the believer's recognition of the truth that He **"suffered for us."** **"The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed"** (Isaiah 53:5).

It is well, owing to the excessive levity of our hearts, to understand the deep meaning of the bitter herbs. Who can read such Psalms as the 6, 22, 38, 49, 88, and 109, and not enter, in some measure, into the meaning of the unleavened bread with bitter herbs? Practical holiness of life with deep subduedness of soul must flow from real communion with Christ's suffering, for it is quite impossible that moral evil and levity of spirit can exist in view of those sufferings.

But, it may be asked, is there not a deep joy for the soul in the consciousness that Christ has borne our sins; that He has fully drained, on our behalf, the cup of God's righteous wrath? Unquestionably. This is the solid foundation of all our joy. But can we ever forget that it was for **"our sins"** He suffered? Can we ever lose sight of the soul-subduing truth that the blessed Lamb of God bowed His head beneath the weight of our transgressions. Surely not. We must eat our lamb with bitter herbs, which, be it remembered, do not set forth the tears of a worthless and shallow sentimentality, but the deep and real experiences of a soul that enters, with spiritual intelligence and power, into the meaning and into the practical effect of the Cross.

In contemplating the Cross, we find in it that which cancels all our guilt.

This imparts sweet peace and joy. But we find in it also the complete setting aside of nature, the crucifixion of **"the flesh,"** the death of **"the old man"** (See Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14; Colossians 2:11). This, in its practical results, will involve much that is "bitter" to nature. It will call for self-denial, the mortification of our members which are on the earth, (Colossians 3:5), the reckoning of self to be dead indeed unto sin. (Romans 6). All these things may seem terrible to look at; but when one gets inside the blood-stained door-post he thinks quite differently. The very herbs which, to an Egyptian's taste, would, no doubt, have seemed so bitter, formed an integral part of Israel's redemption feast. Those who are redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, who know the joy of fellowship with Him, esteem it a "feast" to put away evil and to keep nature in the place of death.

"And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire" (Ver. 10).

In this command, we are taught that the communion of the congregation was, in no wise, to be separated from the sacrifice on which that communion was founded. The heart must ever cherish the vivid remembrance that all true fellowship is inseparably connected with accomplished redemption. To think of having communion with God, on any other ground is to imagine that He could have fellowship with our evil; and to think of fellowship with man, on any other ground, is but to form an unholy club, from which nothing could issue but confusion and iniquity.

In a word, all must be founded upon, and inseparably linked with, the blood. This is the simple meaning of eating the paschal lamb the same night on which the blood was shed. The fellowship must not be separated from its foundation.

What a beautiful picture, then, we have in the blood-sheltered assembly of Israel, feeding peacefully on the roasted lamb, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs! No fear of judgment, no fear of the wrath of the Lord, no fear of the terrible hurricane of righteous vengeance which was sweeping vehemently over the land of Egypt, at the midnight hour. All was profound peace within the blood-stained lintel. They had no need to fear anything from without; and nothing within could trouble them, save leaven, which would have proved a death-blow to all their peace and blessedness. What a picture for the Church! What a picture for the Christian! May we gaze upon it with an enlightened eye and a teachable spirit!

However, we are not yet done with this most instructive ordinance. We have been looking at Israel's position, and Israel's food, let us now look at Israel's habit.

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover” (Ver. 11).

They were to eat it as a people prepared to leave behind them the land of death and darkness, wrath and judgment, to move onward toward the land of promise - their destined inheritance. The blood which had preserved them from the fate of Egypt's firstborn was also the foundation of their deliverance from Egypt's bondage; and they were now to set out and walk with God toward the land that flowed with milk and honey.

True, they had not yet crossed the Red Sea; they had not yet gone the **“three days' journey.”** Still they were, in principle, a redeemed people, a separated people, a pilgrim people, an expectant people, a dependent people; and their entire habit was to be in keeping with their present position and future destiny.

- the girded loins bespoke intense separation from all around them, together with a readiness to serve.
- the shod feet declared their preparedness to leave that scene; while the staff was the expressive emblem of a pilgrim people, in the attitude of leaning on something outside themselves.

Precious characteristics! Would that they were more exhibited by every member of God's redeemed family.

Beloved Christian reader, let us **“meditate on these things.”** We have tasted, through grace, the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus; as such it is our privilege to feed upon His adorable Person and delight ourselves in His **“unsearchable riches;”** to have fellowship in His sufferings and be made conformable to His death. Oh! let us, therefore, be seen with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, the girded loins, the shoes and staff. In a word, let us be marked as a holy people, a crucified people, a watchful and diligent people - a people manifestly **“on our way to God”** - on our way to glory - **“bound for the kingdom.”**

May God grant us to enter into the depth and power of all these things; so that they may not be mere theories in our intellects mere principles of scriptural knowledge and interpretation; but living, divine realities, known by experience, and exhibited in the life, to the glory of God.

We shall close this section by glancing, for a moment, at verses 43-49. Here we are taught that while it was the place and privilege of every true Israelite to eat the Passover, yet no uncircumcised stranger should participate therein. **“There shall no stranger eat thereof . . . all the congregation of Israel shall keep it.”**

Circumcision was necessary ere the Passover could be eaten. In other words, the sentence of death must be written upon nature ere we can intelligently feed upon Christ, either as the ground of peace or the center of unity.

Circumcision has its antitype in the Cross. The male alone was circumcised. The female was represented in the male. So, in the Cross, Christ represented His Church, and, hence, the Church is crucified with Christ; nevertheless, she lives by the life of Christ, known and exhibited on earth, through the power of the Holy Ghost. **“And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.”** **“They that are in the flesh cannot please God”** (Romans 8:8).

The ordinance of circumcision formed the grand boundary line between the Israel of God and all the nations that were upon the face of the earth; and the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ forms the boundary between the church and the world. It matters not, in the smallest degree, what advantages of person or position a man possessed, he could have no part with Israel until he submitted to that flesh-cutting operation. A circumcised beggar was nearer to God than an uncircumcised king. So, also, now, there can be no participation in the joys of God’s redeemed, save by the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that cross sweeps away all pretensions, levels all distinctions, and unites all in one holy congregation of blood-washed worshippers. The Cross forms a boundary so lofty, and a defense so impenetrable, that not a single atom of earth or of nature can cross over or pass through to mingle itself with **“the new creation.”** **All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself** (II Corinthians 5:18).

But, not only was Israel’s separation from all strangers strictly maintained, in the institution of the Passover; Israel’s unity was also as clearly enforced.

“In one house shall it be eaten: thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house. Neither shall ye break a bone thereof” (Ver. 46).

Here is as fair and beautiful a type as we could have of the **“one body and one Spirit.”** The Church of God is one. God sees it as such, maintains it as such, and will manifest it as such, in the view of angels, men, and devils, notwithstanding all that has been done to interfere with that hallowed unity. Blessed be God, the unity of His Church is as much in His keeping as is her justification, acceptance, and eternal security. **“He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken”** (Psalm 34:20).

And, again, **“a bone of him shall not be broken”** (John 19:36). Despite the rudeness and hard-heartedness of Rome’s soldiery, and despite all the hostile influences which have been set to work, from age to age, the body of Christ is one and its divine unity can never be broken.

“THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE Spirit;” and that, moreover, down here, on this very earth. Happy are they who have got faith to recognize this precious truth, and faithfulness to carry it out, in these last days; notwithstanding the almost insuperable difficulties which attend upon their profession and their practice! I believe God will own and honour such.

The Lord deliver us from that spirit of unbelief which would lead us to judge by the sight of our eyes, instead of by the light of His changeless Word!

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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