

The Passover: Both Sacrifice and Sacrament

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“And ye shall keep it unto the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it at even.” (Between the two evenings) Exodus 12:6

“This is the ordinance of the Passover” ... “in one house shall it be eaten.” Exodus 12:43,
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This time I would like to ask of you to carefully read this little essay on a very interesting and important subject. The subject is not new; others have written on it better than I can. But it is quite important for the proper understanding of the God-instituted "sacraments" that it be understood that the Passover is **both** a sacrifice and a sacrament, and that it was thus kept in Israel. It was not merely a "memorial feast" but as a feast of commemoration it was, an Old Testament Sacrament on a par with the Sacrament of circumcision, which was a "sign and seal of the righteous which is by faith"? (Romans 4: 11)

There have ever been Protestants who maintained over against the teaching of Roman Catholicism that the Passover in Israel was not a sacrifice, but merely a feast of remembrance. As Israel later kept the feast, when they had entered the land of Canaan, it was not a sacrifice. It is then contended. Others have said that the Passover was not a "sacrament". Of course, it was not a sacrament in the New Testament sense¹ Nor, for that matter, was the Old Testament rite of circumcision a sacrament as is our New Testament baptism. But we do hold that both circumcision and Passover were the Old Testament, typical sacraments, holy signs and seals, instituted by **God**, as the Jehovah of His people.

It is the Reformed position that baptism has taken the place of the O.T. circumcision. (Baptism Form) In the Form we read, "Since baptism has come in the place of circumcision..." The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 74 says, "...they must therefore be ... distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant." Both are signs and seals of the righteousness which is by faith. That is the Reformed position in contradistinction from the position of the Baptists!

Such is the clear teaching of Scriptures in many passages. Paul teaches in Colossians 2: 11, 12 that the circumcision of Christ is tantamount to being buried with Christ in baptism. Paul says in Philippians 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of **God**, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Circumcision, as a sign of the righteousness by faith, prefigured the circumcision not by hands, which is of Christ. It is a sign that the ungodly are justified by faith. (Romans 4:5)

Now what was true of the sign of circumcision is equally true of the "sign and seal!" In the Passover feast as a **sacrifice** and **sacrament**. It is a sign and seal of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of the Pashal lamb, pointing to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Just as baptism took the place of the O.T. circumcision, so the Lord's Supper took the place of the O.T. Passover. The last Passover feast was translated by Jesus Himself into the New Testament Supper of the Lord in the night in which He was betrayed.

It is quite evident that the sacrifice in the Passover was very unique. There was no other sacrifice in Israel like it. This should be clearly seen and we shall attempt to point this out now.

First of all, it should be noticed that the Passover feast was arranged and instituted by the **Lord** on a very special occasion. It was not instituted by God on Mount Sinai at the time when Moses received the law from God by the hands of angels. (Galatians 3:19) It really was not at all a part of the law-giving. Jesus makes a point of it, according to John 7:22, that circumcision was not really given by Moses in the law-giving, but that it was “of the fathers”, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So also the institution of the Passover was prior to Moses’ giving of the law. It belongs not to the law-giving but it belongs in the very warp and woof of the fulfillment of the promise, to wit, Israel’s redemption from Egypt, the land of spiritual bondage. Israel was a picture of sin’s dominion! The sacrifice here ordered of the lamb is one which is in a class all by itself. It is not a sacrifice ordered in Sinai, but in the very land of Egypt. Harking back to this Hosea says, “out of Egypt have I called my Son.” (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15)

It seems to me that this places this matter a bit in the light of the prophetic word as fulfilled in Jesus. This shows that the sacrifice of the Passover has a character and nature of all its own.

It was most definitely a sacrifice. Rome has perpetuated this sacrifice in their popish mass, which is a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ. But the Passover must need remain a sacrifice until the Seed should come to whose death on the Cross it pointed. When Israel entered into the land of Canaan, the Passover lamb was no longer slain by the head of the Levites in the temple. (II Chronicles 30:16; 35:11; Ezra 6:19) Afterwards, the blood was sprinkled by the priest on the altar and the Passover meal-time was held in the temple (Deuteronomy 16:2) where God had placed His name.

So the Passover was, first of all, very definitely a sacrifice.

It is, furthermore, very interesting and instructive to notice that the Passover was not limited to being a sacrifice, but that it was a sacrifice that ended in a meal-time, a sacramental eating of the slain lamb. After the lamb, without spot or blemish, had been chosen and slain, the blood was taken and put on the door posts of the houses on that first Passover feast in Egypt. In later times, however, after Israel had entered into the land, the blood was sprinkled on the altar. After this, the lamb was eaten whole. Not a bone of it was to be broken. It was not to be prepared like our lamb chops, but the “body” of the lamb was to be eaten. Hence, no uncircumcised person might partake of it. (Exodus 12:48b) It was a Jehovah-supper with His people between the two evenings. Also the women and children might partake of it, even though the women were not circumcised. It was a partaking of the blood of the covenant sacramentally, a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith, be such a believer male or female, adult or child. In hope, it was an eating of the “body” of Christ. It looked to the fulfillment of the word made flesh, who said: “sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare me.” (Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 40:6-8) Israel was saved in the “surety” which Christ presents in the Old Testament sacrament (Hebrews 7:22) In faith, Israel looked to the great Passover to come, which Passover is now slain. (I Corinthians 5:7b)

There is still another matter which must not escape our notice. We refer to the fact that the sacrifice in the Passover must be clearly distinguished from both the sin-offerings and the thank offerings which were prescribed on Sinai. The Passover sacrifice was not such a sin-offering. Notice particularly, that the sin-offering might not be eaten as was the Passover sacrifice of the perfect lamb. The sin-offering must be burned without the camp outside of the gate. (Deuteronomy 4:20, 21) Not so the lamb of the Passover. This must be eaten whole; it must

be eaten as a "body" of the lamb. Then, too, the Passover was not a sacrifice like the thank offerings prescribed on Sinai. The latter followed the bringing of the sin-offerings and they presupposed that reconciliation had been brought already. Not so the Pashal offering. This was brought to bring about reconciliation. Here in the Passover, we have a meal-time which represented the perfect sacrifice which must be eaten. Except ye eat my flesh ye have no life in you. This Passover feast was both sacrifice and sacrament, as it pointed back to the deliverance in the night of the death of the firstborn of Egypt, and as it pointed forward to the night in which Jesus would be betrayed, and would die as the Firstborn Son of **God**, and would by His death and resurrection grant us to eat the bread and wine new in the Kingdom of heaven.

Yes, it was definitely a sacrament in Old Testament Form. It was not the "law" which said do this and thou shalt live, but it was the gift of God which is eternal life: redemption from sin and death. It was a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith.

Now the sacrifice is no more. To revive it is the horrible error of Rome. Christ died once in the end of the ages. He fulfilled His "exodus" at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:31) Now we have the fulfillment of the communion sacrament of the Old Testament, the supper of Jehovah God with His redeemed people. The great antitype has become reality in Christ's blood on the Cross.

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