

Be a Responsible Christian!

Personal Responsibility — A Major Theme of the Passover

As we approach the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread once again, we see the need to “renew”, as it were, the covenant God has with us.

A. **The covenant at Mt Sinai:** *“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”* (Exodus 19:5-6).

B. **The covenant in the New Testament:** *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called out of darkness into His marvelous light, who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy”* (I Peter 2:9-10).



Unleavened bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Jesus Christ, taken by Christians as symbols of the eternal covenant, in remembrance of Him.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, say-

ing, ‘Know the Lord’, for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:10-12; see also Hebrews 10:16 and Jeremiah 31:33-34).

We read in regard to the Passover that we are to *“...purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the*

leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:7-8). This must involve a close examination of ourselves, as Paul makes clear in II Corinthians 13:5: *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in You? — unless indeed you are disqualified?”*

Disqualified means “unable to stand the test” (Greek *adokimos*).

Peter makes clear in I Peter 1:6-9 that this *testing* (*dokimazo*, “to test or assay metals, to examine or scrutinize”) is like gold being refined in fire. Refining by heat allows the impurities to rise to the top of the melted metal, leaving pure metal beneath ... and we know that this heat of refining refers to the trials we experience in life. We are

grieved by these trials, as Peter says, but in the end they are “... *found to praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ ...*”, whom we love with inexpressible joy even though we have not seen Him.

Examine Yourself

What does this “examination and “testing” Paul speaks of in II Corinthians 13 really mean? Does it not center around taking personal responsibility for what we do, what we say, and what we think? In-



The need for self-examination is never more imperative than during the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, when we liken ourselves to the Israelites who fled from Egypt (sin), to take on a new life in the Land of Promise (Canaan).

deed it does, for Christ said that we must give account in the day of judgement of every idle word we speak (Matthew 12:36). We know that “... *faith without works is dead*” (James 2:20), and that we are to bring “... *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*” (II Corinthians 10:5). That is a tall order, but for each of us it is indeed possible, for Jesus Christ said so to the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-26; see also Mark 9:23, Mark 10:27, and Mark 14:36).

Paul used the same word as did Peter when speaking of examining or testing our-

selves. When discussing the Passover, he stated,

*“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an **unworthy (anaxios,** “in an improper manner”) manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man **examine (dokiamazo)** himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an **unworthy (anaxios)** manner eats and drinks judgement of himself, not **discerning (diakrino,** “to separate, sever, make a difference”) the Lord’s body. For this reason many are **weak (asthenes,** “without strength, infirm”) and **sick (arrostos,** “ill, sick”) among you, and many **sleep (koimao,** “lull to sleep, sleep in death”). For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (I Corinthians 11:27-32).*

Are We Fulfilling the Responsibility God Has Given Us?

It is most interesting that right after Paul discusses the Passover with the Corinthian brethren, and how they are to examine themselves as if by being refined by fire — as Peter puts it — Paul goes right into spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12. This natural flow of thought shows how important it is to utilize these gifts of the spirit that God has granted us. Notice that he mentions a great number of these gifts throughout the chapter.

Apostles (apostolos, “one sent as a messenger or agent, the bearer of a commission”)

Prophets (prophetes, “a spokesman for another, a person gifted for the

exposition of divine truth”)

Teachers (*didaskalos*, “a teacher, master”)

Miracle workers (*dynamis*, “power, strength, ability”)

Healers (*iama*, “healing, cure”)

Helps (*antilempsis*, “aid, assistant”)

Administrators (*kybernesis*, “government, office of a governor or director”)

Varieties of tongues (*glossa*, “the tongue, speech, language — known or unknown”)

All of the ecclesia are to work together using their gifts, for each is a member of the body and a variation from the same spirit given at baptism. “*The manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ..*”, and has been given by God Himself to each member “*... just as He pleased.*” This makes plain that we do not have a choice in the matter as to who we are or the gift we have received ... only whether or not we will use it! Notice how Peter emphasizes the need to utilize these gifts.

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles (logion, “a divine communication or revelation”) of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (I Peter 4:10-11).

The Way of Love

It is most interesting to note how the apostles failed miserably to understand this idea of love, immediately after they had

taken the symbols of bread and wine at the Passover! In Luke 22:24-27 the story unfolds of how they began to discuss amongst themselves who would be greatest in the Kingdom. Showing utter ignorance concerning the love a follower of Christ is to express towards his neighbor, Jesus had to step in and explain that the greatest of all is the servant, just as He came not to rule like the despotic leaders of this world but as a humble servant.

Paul’s discussion flows naturally from spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12 to the concept of love in I Corinthians 13. “*But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way*” (I Corin-



Pure, undefiled religion and love is to selflessly help those unable to help themselves, such as the elderly, infirm, widows, orphaned, and disadvantaged among us. Have we thought of the needs of these people we come across in life from time to time, and helped them in their trials?

ans 12:31). Are we living this “more excellent way” in our day-to-day lives? After all, we are known by the love we have for one another.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for

one another" (John 13:34-35).

This is the attitude of God's spirit that He has placed within us, which will motivate us to if necessary lay down our lives for one another (John 15:13), even as Jesus Christ and our heavenly Father so loved us that the Son was sacrificed that we might have life (John 3:16). Before Jesus left the physical world and finally ascended to heaven, He asked Peter three times, "*Do you love Me?*" Peter said that He did love Him, and he was told, "*Feed My lambs,*" "*Tend My sheep*", and "*Feed My sheep*" (John 21:15-17).

Love comes from the Greek *agape*, and means a God-plane generosity, concern and devotedness. It is much more than a pleasant feeling in one's heart, but rather it is a complete, unadulterated commitment to *do* the will of the Father as Christ did (John 5:30; 8:28), to keep His commandments (I John 5:2-3). Those commandments we cannot keep unless God's spirit dwells within us, and we just read earlier that the covenant of our Father with us is the law written in our hearts (Hebrews 8:10-12).

What Then Should We Examine?

As we approach the Passover, what then should we examine within our lives so that we might take the body and blood of Christ worthily? After all, we are told to examine ourselves and then "*... eat of the bread and drink of the cup*" (I Corinthians 11:28). We are not told to avoid taking of the bread and wine if we believe we are not worthy. but we are to examine ourselves and *take it!* **The issue is attitude ... being willing to see where we fall short of God's perfection and then being willing to make the needed changes in our lives to gain Christ's character ... the love, joy,**

peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and moderation of His spirit living in us (Galatians 5:22-23). That character will cause you to love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:43-48).

Let us examine these matters in our personal lives and see if any of them apply.

- A. Do we love our spiritual brethren as much as ourselves? (Philippians 2:1-5)
- B. Do we still harbor a grudge or any ill-will against any of God's people, or of anyone else?
- C. Are we praying daily, and not just to log in minutes, but seeking God with our whole heart? (Deuteronomy 4:29)
- D. Are we studying God's word daily, and meditating upon it, like the Berans did? (Acts 17:11)
- E. Do we strive to express the joy in living each day that comes with the knowledge of the great salvation that lies before us? (Hebrews 2:3)
- F. Is thanksgiving towards God always being expressed, even when you are crushed and persecuted unjustly? (Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 5:20; I Peter 3:17)

We can be certain that the Passover will be taken worthily if we choose to be responsible Christians. The choice is in our hands, and not in the hands of a priest, minister, parent, spouse, or friend. God sees into every nook and cranny of our beings (Hebrews 4:12), and wants us to be His sons, and He will do everything He can to help prepare us for the brilliant future as Kings and Priests in His government. Let us do all we can to please the One who made us, and take this Passover worthily!

