

Date: September 7, 2014

Title: "Preparations for the Meal"

Scripture Reference: Matthew 26:17-19

Focus: Preparing one's self to encounter God in the Lord's Supper

People tend to miss how God reveals Himself in The Law. Take for example the seven feasts Israelites were to commemorate. Each is a picture of God. Every one reveals another aspect of God.

Consider the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It occurred in the middle of the first month of their year, Nisan (March-April). It started the day after Passover. By Jesus' time these two Holy Days had merged into one. It lasted seven days and began with a holy convocation before God and ended with another. In between, the people were not to eat anything with leaven.

This Holy Day was about more than Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It was, and continues to be, about God, their sin, and YHWH's actions to deliver them.

Matthew records for us Jesus' last Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. As the time approached, the disciples asked Jesus about the preparation of the Passover (v. 17). We are told they were dutiful in the task of preparing for the meal (v. 19). Let's consider their preparations.

There are three *preparations* to look at:

The preparation for the cleansing of the “Chametz.”

This entails removing anything from the house that contains leaven. It involves dusting, sweeping, vacuuming, and mopping every surface. All counters, appliances, walls and windows are cleaned as well. The result was a house declared Kosher.

The practical preparation of the meal.

For the Passover, a place had to be made ready and items acquired. Jesus had taken care of this through an arrangement with a local individual to use his home. The disciples only had to contact the man and make sure everything was ready.

The preparation of the individual.

This is the easiest preparation to overlook. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was not really about the leaven. Nor was it an occasion to clean house. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a time for families to celebrate God’s deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It was to focus on YHWH and His faithfulness to Israel.

However, as is often the case, people forget about the substance of an event and focus on the superficial. i.e. Veteran’s Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, etc.

Today, the majority of the preparation among people who observe the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread or the

Gentiles who partake of the Lord's Supper, is devoted to the place and the elements. Little thought given to personal preparation. Or, am I wrong?

As it turned out for Jesus' disciples, given what was experienced that evening, the preparation of the soul was needed more than anything else (Matt. 26:20-22).

The place was ready and the food prepared. But, the disciples were not receptive to the news all of them would deny Him and one would betray Him!

v. 35; "Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.' All the disciples said the same thing too."

Likewise, it was the failure of the disciples at Corinth to prepare themselves that led to their neglect and abuse of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-26).

The Corinthians were blind to their selfishness. Even though they said they were observing a feast of love, each took "*his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.*" (v. 21).

What are the real *preparations* of the Lord's Supper?

Jesus told His disciples (vv. 28-29) as did Paul the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11: 23-25):

1. Embrace Your Inherent Sinfulness

In the Bible leaven is a picture of sin (Ex. 12:15). That is why the Israelites were to get it out of their houses before they met with the Lord.

The reality is, no one is capable of getting all sin out of his or her house (life).

The first preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Lord's Supper is the self-awareness of sin. There needs to be a brokenness regarding one's powerlessness over sin.

Only by embracing the burden of sin and its consequences can Jesus' sacrifice truly be received as *Good News*.

2. Acknowledge Your Need for a Fresh Start

Jesus' disciples only had to wait a few hours to realize their desires did not match up to their performance.

But, rather than come to God on the basis of mercy, some devote themselves even more to the illusion of the ritual to assuage their guilt.

The realization of what one is not, must take place before he can accept what God is. It is at this juncture a person yields his life to God and lets Him in

The Last 18 Inches

What are your preparations for the Lord's Supper? Are they the things of the surface or personal?

How people prepare dictate what they will receive.