

If we continue to read in Job 33 we learn that, when man is shown the righteousness of God, "then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom [*kopher*, a covering, the Lord Jesus Christ]. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy: for He will render unto man his righteousness" (vv. 24-26).

Although God spoke sternly to Job, in His final assessment He spoke highly of him, so that Job acted as priest and offered sacrifices for the forgiveness of his three friends: "And it was so, that after the LORD [Yahweh] had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD [Yahweh] said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath" (42:7). Hence the words of the Apostle Paul: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God That justifieth" (Rom. 8:33). In view of these words, we must be

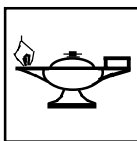
careful what we say about Job, and indeed what we say about our brethren and sisters.

Let us conclude with the words of Job that he spoke in the midst of his troubles as he looked forward to the day of the Master, and the words of the symbol of the saints in Revelation 5:

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God [Eloah]: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27);

"Thou [Christ] art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us [Job saw his redeemer with the eye of faith] to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9,10).

May we be with Job and that glorious assembly in that day.



Encounter

Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by the Publishing Editor

The Law given through Moses*

14. Feasts

Islip Collyer

WHEN WE COME to consider the feasts commanded under the Law, we are on the threshold of that great subject which has been described as 'the Mosaic parable'. The 'solemn feasts', as they are repeatedly called, constituted an important part of Israel's national life and were undoubtedly of value even in their immediate and temporary effects; but it is hardly possible for an attentive reader to resist the conclusion that they come into the region of ritual prophecy. They not only commemorated great events of the past, they also pointed forward to still greater matters as yet imperfectly revealed.

The first was the Passover, truly a solemn feast, which by Gentile standards would not be

accounted a feast at all. On the tenth day of the first month the Israelites were to choose a lamb for each household, or, if families were too small, for a group of households, making an appropriate number of people. On the fourteenth day of the month the lamb was to be slain, some of its blood was to be sprinkled on the doorposts of their dwellings, and then the flesh was to be roasted and eaten. It was wholly to be consumed, even "with the purtenance thereof". It was to be taken with an accompaniment of bitter herbs and unleavened bread. It was to be eaten hastily, as by a people ready for the march, with loins girded, feet shod and staff in hand. Then for

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seven days, even until the twenty-first day of the month, they were to eat unleavened bread. No leaven was to be found in all their dwellings (Ex. 12:1-11, 18-20).

THE first obvious thought suggested by these instructions is that this was no feast according to Gentile ideas. Unleavened bread is most unattractive. It is very hard, and even when the teeth by strenuous (and it may be even painful) work have forced it to yield, the taste brings no compensation. That the people of Israel held the same opinion is shown by the contrast they drew between pleasant bread and bread of affliction (Deut. 16:3). Indeed, the same thought is evident in the instructions given when the Passover was instituted. The rigid exclusion of leaven from all their habitations is an indication of how strong the temptation would be to eat some of the pleasant bread which could be made by introducing leaven into the dough.

Why is it that this most unattractive feast has survived through the ages in spite of dispersion and persecution? Why is it that, as the spring brings Passover Day, Jews through all the world should keep this ordinance, if not always with full obedience to the original commandments, at least with compliance as near as adverse circumstances will permit?

We may note the instructions given in Exodus 12:26, 27, and we have heard of the ceremonial manner in which this injunction is observed by the Jews, the youngest of a family putting the question as to what is the meaning of the service, and the father answering by relating the circumstances of the deliverance from Egypt. This explains the mystery, if we accept the Scriptural record. An extraordinary deliverance, the beginning of national history and the greatest event in their experience! An unpleasant but most impressive ceremonial to commemorate the day, and then the record not only written in their annals but passed from father to son through the ages! On this basis we may be able to understand the persistence of this unattractive and very solemn feast. But how can it be explained by those who do not believe the record?

Mr H. L. Hastings, in his book *The Wonderful Law*, makes sport of the idea that such an affliction of soul could be thrust on a nation by an impostor to commemorate a deliverance which never occurred. He rightly says that if such an impostor tried to impose a law that for a full week the nation should eat only unleavened

bread—"hard tack" Mr Hastings calls it—the effect would be to drive men to an opposite extreme. They would choose any other kind of bread in rebellion against a meaningless act of petty tyranny. The repudiation of the Scriptural record would leave the Passover a yearly mystery. If, on the other hand, we accept the record and recognise the purpose of God in the matter, it is easy to understand the enduring ceremony, the feast sometimes becoming a weariness and the observance of it being lax, yet sometimes a great revival arousing a religious enthusiasm able to triumph over all fleshly reluctance.

IS there anything more intended in the ceremony? Is there anything significant for later generations in the blood of the slain lamb saving men from the angel of death? Is there any hidden meaning in the particular instruction that no bone of the lamb should be broken and that all the flesh, even "with the purtenance thereof", should be eaten? Was anything more than an immediate affliction and discipline intended in the bitter herbs and the hard and unappetising bread?

Christians answer that there is a deeper meaning in these things. They take their place among many prophecies pointing to the work of Christ. Some of the pointers are so slight in themselves that if viewed in isolation they would not be impressive; but, when seen in combination by one who is able to take a comprehensive view, they are completely convincing. They are like the many slight marks which guide the Indian tracker unerringly along the trail. A novice from a civilised land cannot see the significance of these little marks, even when they are pointed out to him, but the Indian sees them in unmistakable combination and he can run as he reads.

The lamb of the Passover is linked in our minds with the accepted offering of Abel, and it brings to memory the New Testament phrase, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). A student of Scripture can remember many other symbols and many plain prophecies offering deliverance from the messenger of death.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the unleavened bread was intended to be significant, for there were times in the Mosaic ceremonial when leavened bread was specifically ordered. Clearly there was a meaning in this distinction, and there seems good reason to suppose that the interpretation of the symbol by Paul was in harmony with the ideas originally intended. Writing of the memorial symbols, the

Apostle says: "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. 5:8).

In harmony with the spirit of all the New Testament, he puts the full emphasis on moral qualities. These are always of supreme importance, though often obscured by the over-accentuation of unessential details. The apostle says nothing as to the kind of bread or wine that we should use in the memorial service. It is a sad failure when Christian disciples manifest unchristian and even malicious feelings in disputes regarding symbols which have not been defined. If it had been necessary for us in our commemoration of the Lord's supper to use either leavened or unleavened bread, plain instruction would have been given.

Christianity was intended for all the world; it was not designed for a Divinely protected nation settled in a favoured land. Disciples have often been fugitives living on such bread as they could get. By a gracious provision of the Lord they have only been required to observe ceremonies with symbols easy of access. For baptism they need water, abundant wherever men congregate. For the symbols of remembrance they have need of bread, which is the staff of life and must be available if men are to live at all, and wine, one of the very few commodities which keep indefinitely, and very little of which is needed for our service. The Jews in their dispersion have been unable to sustain an elaborate ritual such as was possible when in the favoured land. Christians have never had a country of their own; often they have been scattered and persecuted. They have never been required to observe a difficult ceremonial.

It was possible for a Jew in measure to see the significance of leaven in the Mosaic symbols. It must have been clear to men, even in those early days, that the principle of leaven is that of corruption. It would surely occur to some of them that the rigorous exclusion of leaven from their homes, and the week of unleavened bread in the most important of their solemn feasts, not only was intended as an affliction of the flesh, but even suggested the complete repudiation of the natural man. Whether they understood or not, it was in fact a pointer to the great truth that through the blood of the slain lamb there would be deliverance from death, and the possibility of life free from the principle of corruption.

There may be some earnest readers who will

object to the statement that plain instruction would have been given if it had been necessary to use any special kind of bread in the memorial supper. Some will say that unleavened bread should certainly be used because Christ is our Passover and he was sinless. Moreover, they point out that the memorial was instituted at Passover time, and there would be nothing but unleavened bread available to the disciples. Others insist that leavened bread should be used because Jesus partook of our weak human nature, and the apostle associates disciples with Christ in this feast of remembrance: "For we being many are one bread, and one body" (1 Cor. 10:17).

This controversy has continued with varying degrees of intensity and feeling for nearly one hundred years. The very fact that earnest students in such a period have been unable to find a conclusive argument justifies the statement we have made. If either leavened or unleavened bread had been essential, plain instruction would have been given. The Christian religion was intended for a scattered and feeble people, often needing to flee from persecution. No stringent rules were imposed as to the exact quality of the emblems to be used. Let them use such bread and such wine as are available, but let them make sure that they have the spirit of Christ, with every unworthy thought completely banished. That is the supremely important matter.

As to the meaning we might attach to leavened or unleavened bread as a memorial of Christ, we must surely agree that the application of the symbol would have to be understood in the light of plain apostolic teaching, not that the teaching should be overruled by our interpretation of the symbol. The language of Scripture is plain enough. The Lord Jesus was made in all points like his brethren and tempted like them (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15). He was a partaker of our weak and corruptible nature and was "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4). Therefore the corruptible principle of leaven in bread would be quite appropriate as a symbol of that corruptible nature which he bore and from which he effected deliverance. But he never sinned, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26), and for this cause his flesh was not permitted to see corruption (Acts 2:22-31). Therefore the unleavened bread would be an appropriate symbol of his perfection and of the incorruptible and immortal life which he brought to light.