

Are you ready to take the Passover?

Another year has nearly passed! Soon the Passover will be here and another priceless opportunity to live through the panorama of God's annual Holy Days — His plan of salvation for you and for the whole world. Are you ready for this vital observance — are you ready to take the Passover?

by Albert J. Portune

IN JUST a short while YOU will be sitting down with a very select few people on this earth to partake of the PASSOVER.

The Passover is a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Partaking of the symbols of His broken body and shed blood means that YOU have been selected to know and understand God's purpose. Being chosen as one of the ELECT to know God's truth carries sobering responsibilities. We cannot approach this event lightly.

Prelude to the Holy Days

The Passover is the first event beginning again God's annual season of Holy Days which reveal His plan of salvation for the whole world. That plan, hidden from the world in general, reveals why you cannot take this event lightly.

That plan reveals that YOU have been called to know and understand God's purpose — AHEAD of the majority of mankind. Jesus said: "It is given unto

you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:11).

The world is not being called now! Only the Elect are being called at this time. God's Holy Days, revolving around the harvest seasons in Palestine, show that WE are part of the *early* harvest — representing the Elect. The rest of the world will not be given their opportunity until Jesus returns and the Millennium begins -- the *late* or fall harvest (see Leviticus 23).

The sobering truth is that we have been called in a special calling or time to qualify ahead of the world so we can be *used* by God and Christ to help bring knowledge and salvation to the rest of mankind.

God is vitally concerned with us as we approach this Passover, because of our important part in His plan. He is deeply concerned with our attitude. He wants to KNOW if we are totally surrendered to Him. Now is the time, just before the Passover, to examine our-

selves to see whether we are truly RIGHT with God and in harmony with Him and His plan.

Self-examination

Do you realize that at this coming Passover you *could* eat and drink DAMNATION?

God inspired the Apostle Paul to write: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, *unworthily*, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man EXAMINE HIMSELF, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh *unworthily*, eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (I Cor. 11:27-29).

Brethren, this warning wouldn't be in God's Word if there were not mortal danger for YOU. This coming Passover is a vital time, whether you have taken the Passover many times or if this is your FIRST time.

What does it mean to discern the

Lord's body? How can we eat and drink *unworthily*? How can we eat and drink damnation to ourselves? Let's understand.

Getting Into Focus

God wants us to isolate a very basic and elementary perspective each year at the Passover. He wants us to focus on that elementary concept as we begin again to relive His plan of *salvation* for mankind. That elementary concept is *salvation*. That's what His plan is all about, whether it relates to us or the world.

Therefore, brethren, the Passover is a time for us to once again get down to the elementary precepts of our OWN salvation — our OWN relationship to God and His Work. It is a time to examine OURSELVES. A time to look at YOU.

We can get so absorbed in our work or in the "deeper things," the seemingly "important" things, that we can forget WE have to *get* and *keep* OURSELVES right with God. That's what the Passover is all about.

There is never a time we can allow ourselves to get so busy or so important in our own eyes that we no longer need to get deadly serious about the elementary concepts of salvation that we so intimately associated with the Passover.

The Elementary Principles

No matter how long we have been in God's Church or how spiritual we have become, we are *still* human beings with human nature. Not one of us will ever come to a place in this life when we can afford to forget *what* we are. Just before the Passover we should take another look — a long, good look!

What is man like?

"The heart [of man] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9.)

"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is *not* subject to the law of God, *neither* indeed *can* be" (Rom. 8:7).

Yes, this *is* the kind of *nature* all human beings have! And this is the time of year to especially remember that fact. It is also a time to rehearse and reaffirm what you have done with the knowledge that you have that kind of nature.

The truth of the matter is, human nature is *alien* to God and to His ways. Man's heart is wickedly inclined. He is deceitful, totally opposed to the ways of God. Most men have never seen themselves this way. Most men do not have the slightest awareness they have this kind of nature — but it's true. Satan, in hiding this truth from mankind, has done his work well!

Environment, Too

Not only is man's nature this way, but his environment is virtually totally alien to God. Mankind does not know that this world is not GOD's world — yet. God is allowing Satan to rule this world for a time. He is allowing Satan to seduce man through man's mind and fleshly pulls to want and to imbibe of all the evil things of this world.

Satan is the present ruler of this world and he is blinding men's minds to the truth that *you* have been given the privilege to understand. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:3-5).

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is NOT of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:16).

So, in our examination, let's realize what kind of basic nature we have and what kind of a world we live in.

Light in Darkness

For us who are the Elect, light and understanding has come by the calling of God's Holy Spirit. Through God's infinite mercy YOU were called as one of His Elect to see yourself and your environment as *THEY REALLY ARE!*

This was a miracle in your life! Do you still realize it?

God sent His Holy Spirit to open your mind to real knowledge. By it He opened your mind to see YOURSELF! You were led to see what human nature was like — what YOU were like. And you were led to see how Satan has influenced you along with all mankind.

You didn't like what you saw!

You wanted to be different. So you came to repentance — a *change* in yourself — because that's what repentance is. The words of the Apostle Paul became your words: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth NO GOOD THING: O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:15, 18, 24.)

So you came to repentance and you were baptized. You went through an outward SYMBOL of death. Baptism is a picture of death, burial and resurrection. You were immersed in a watery grave and brought up in a type of a resurrection. But a resurrection to what?

"How shall we, that are *dead to sin*, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore are we buried with him *by baptism* into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE" (Rom. 6:2-4).

Having seen yourself for what you really were, you wanted to stop being God's enemy. You wanted to stop being deceitful and wicked. You wanted to have all the past evil deeds and thoughts taken away. You wanted to become a NEW — a different person. You saw that Jesus Christ died for you. You saw *why* He had to die — to pay the price for *your* sins and for *your* hostile mind. So you acknowledged Jesus as your own personal Savior. You asked God to accept the sacrifice of Jesus' life for YOUR sins and carnal mind. You openly before God showed Him by your baptism what you TRULY wanted — for your evil carnality to *die* and to be changed into having the kind of nature that is no longer God's enemy.

When God saw this genuine, heartfelt attitude, He put His Holy Spirit *within* you and begot you as His own child.

But that isn't the end of the story!

Not the End

Now began what is perhaps the hardest part of all — for every one of us. Having crucified, in a sense, the "old



nature," we each soon found that the old nature wasn't dead. Though we wished for it to be destroyed, we found it still had life and vigor.

AND THAT'S JUST THE POINT!

God intended it this way for a vital purpose. God wants us to comprehend the REAL DEPTH OF THE EVIL, WICKEDNESS AND DECEITFULNESS that is in us. God is allowing us to live on WITH our fleshly natures and in an alien environment to teach us how really and *profoundly* EVIL we have been — and how often we still fall short.

We know that we have crucified the old man to the intent that the body of SIN (our very nature) might be destroyed (Rom. 6:6). We know that once we are resurrected or changed at Jesus' return, we will be freed from this kind of nature (verse 7). But, *until* that time comes, we must reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and living the righteous life (verse 11). The struggle then begins to "let not sin therefore *reign* in your MORTAL body, that you should *obey it* in the lusts thereof" (verse 12).

When we are first baptized, we are called "babes" in Christ. Notwithstanding the fact that we have come to miraculous and profound knowledge at baptism, we still are just *beginning* a life of overcoming. We need to grow

HUNGRY! — When we are first baptized, God looks upon us as "newborn babes" which must be fed the "milk" of His Word in order to grow spiritually.

and mature in understanding and perspective. "... As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may GROW thereby" (I Peter 2:2). "But grow in GRACE, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).

As we grow in a deeper and more profound knowledge of spiritual things our ability to see *ourselves* becomes more acute. We see things about ourselves and our natures that *we never saw* at baptism. This is right! It is progress! It is what God intended.

When Paul received God's Holy Spirit and began to grow, he found that his more profound knowledge of God's spiritual law made sin appear to become *exceeding sinful* (Rom. 7:13). And so it is with us. The longer we live with ourselves in this flesh the more our knowledge of God's perfect spiritual law (that we are privileged to understand) convicts us of the exceeding sinfulness of the carnal human nature.

So, as we approach the Passover, we have had one more year to live with ourselves. God is now asking us once

again to partake of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. Has this past year convinced you that you have come to the place that you no longer *need* the sacrifice of Christ? Or rather has it convinced you that you need it *EVEN MORE PROFOUNDLY* than ever before?

THIS IS ALL INCLUDED IN "DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY."

Certainly you have grown in personal overcoming of sin. Certainly you have grown in Bible understanding and spiritual knowledge. But have you grown in personally knowing *YOU* need Jesus Christ more than ever before? And have you grown in completely TRUSTING HIM — whether for healing, by means of His broken body, or for salvation through the value of His blood that once coursed through that body, or in any kind of day-to-day need in which He is our Advocate to intervene in your behalf?

Ready for the Passover?

Each year God commands us to live through again His Holy Days which picture His plan of salvation for the world. Each year we begin again with the primary beginning — the Passover — the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Each year we should be observing God's Holy Days with greater desire for the fulfillment of His plan because we should have seen the need for it more profoundly than ever before — for ourselves and for the world.

As we start the Holy Days again, it should be with a *renewed* eagerness. It should be with a *more* fervent desire to take those precious symbols because we know far more deeply their meaning to us and to the world.

It's not with a humdrum routine approach that we begin each year. We cannot come up to these days with a half-hearted, apathetic approach. If we do we may eat and drink "unworthily" — eat and drink damnation unto ourselves. No one is "worthy" — a "worthy" *person*. Totally understanding how *unworthy* of Christ's great sacrifice we are, makes us ready to partake of the Passover with full understanding. This is the *only* way we can partake of it

“worthily,” that is, in a worthy *manner* and *attitude!*

God wants His people to approach the Passover with the most earnest and heartfelt desire for the forgiveness of Christ — individually and ultimately for the world. No other attitude demonstrates a true Christian who has grown as he should through the year.

ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE PASSOVER?

No man who has lived another year in the flesh with the presence of the Holy Spirit can approach the Passover without a deeper and more sincere NEED for the sacrifice of Christ. No man can thus take the unleavened bread of Jesus' broken body and the red wine of His shed blood without, in spirit, falling at the foot of the stake before Jesus' bleeding, dying body and saying “For me, for me, Oh God, He died!”

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is *my body* which is GIVEN FOR YOU: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in *my blood*, which is SHED FOR YOU” (Luke 22:19-20).

These words should be more living and personal for you than ever before. ARE THEY?

The Big Picture

Having thus seen the profound need for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our personal lives, we should also have a deeper and more acute desire for the same light and understanding to come to this lost, sin-sick world. Not just in theory, but in fact.

We begin again, with the Passover, picturing God's plan of salvation for the world. It's not just a personal salvation for you alone. There are a lot of human lives going down the drain all around us. The utter hopelessness of a dying civilization sends its groanings up into our consciousness every day.

We, who have been given the knowledge of the ONLY way out for the world, ought to groan within ourselves for the time they, too, can be delivered from the bondage of corruption of which we have been made so acutely aware. Each new year of Holy Day

observances should be from a higher level of awareness, with a greater sense of earnestness for their fulfillment.

There is only ONE WORK truly working toward that end... *THIS WORK*. And you are a part of it.

Has this past year brought you to a deeper dedication? Are you behind God's Work with your *very lives* and all that your lives can produce? Or, are the annual Holy Days to you just another humdrum routine again?

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “He that believeth on him [in His purpose] is not condemned: but he that believeth not [in His purpose] is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (verse 18).

If you truly believe in God's purpose through Jesus Christ and are going ALL OUT for that purpose in YOUR LIFE, then you are properly discerning the Lord's body and are eating and drinking eternal life unto yourself. But if your life and actions show a half-hearted, lethargic support and dedication to His Work — you are eating and drinking damnation to yourself — not discerning, not understanding the full meaning of the Lord's body.

EXAMINE YOURSELF!

Make It Personal

Brethren, there is still time to examine yourself and make this Passover a personal thing between you and God. Look deeply into your life. Have you been just coasting? Were you going to let this just be another routine Passover? If this is true, then you desperately need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the *lethargy* which God's Holy Spirit has led you to see in yourself — just as you should have been led to see many other things about yourself this past year.

For every growing Christian each Passover should be a more profound experience in which our Savior and our God grows more personal, more precious, more wonderful.

ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE PASSOVER — WILL YOU BE READY?

During supper that Passover evening

Jesus rose and girded Himself with a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:2-5). Peter, impulsive and naïve, didn't want to let Jesus “stoop” to washing his feet. But Jesus said to him, “If I wash thee not, THOU HAST NO PART WITH ME!” Peter, of course *did* want to have a part with Christ and consented.

Jesus then said: “Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, YOUR LORD and *Master*, have washed your feet; ye also OUGHT TO WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye IF YE DO THEM” (verses 12-17).

We will wash one another's feet on the Passover. But again it is an outward symbol of an attitude and action in our lives — one of serving the brethren and being willing to give ourselves in HUMILITY for the purposes of God.

Do you have a part with Jesus Christ? Are you in a foot-washing attitude ALL YEAR? That's what the outward symbol of foot-washing you will partake of truly means. Are you discerning the Lord's body? Or, are you perhaps like Peter — not wanting to let the purposes of your God be to take the form of a servant. A growing, discerning Christian knows his God has called him to humble himself as a servant of brethren and mankind.

The Time Is Now

So, brethren, the time is NOW. The Passover is just ahead of you. You have had another year to live, experience and grow. The panorama of YOUR LIFE is there before you along with the tableau of the sacrifice of Christ.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... Surely he hath borne OUR griefs, and carried OUR sorrows... But he was wounded for OUR transgressions, he was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of OUR peace was upon him; and with his stripes WE are healed” (Isa. 53:3-5).

Be READY to take the Passover! □