

Preparing for the Passover

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During the Old Covenant period, God's temple was cleansed beginning on the first day of the first month of a new year (Eze. 45:18). This cleansing of the temple continued throughout a twenty-one day period (Eze. 45:20), which ended on the last Holy Day of the Days of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:1-20).

Jesus Christ, who was fully obedient to his Father's law and commandments (Jn. 5:30; 6:38; 1Pe. 2:21-22), was actively involved with cleansing his Father's temple during this same period of time, and his actions drew attention from the religious leaders of his day,

And Jesus went into the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those who were selling doves.¹³ And he said to them, "It has been written, '**My house shall be called a house of prayer**'; but you make it a '**den of thieves**'" (Mt. 21:12-13; RNT; emphasis added).

And he having gone into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, saying, "By what authority do you do these things, and who gave you this authority?" (Mt. 21:23; RNT).

These religious leaders were claiming the sole right to cleanse the temple of God based on their position under the law regarding animal sacrifices. In other words, they were cleansing the temple with the blood of animals per the instructions given to their forefathers through Moses. As Christ was not a descendant from the tribe of Levi, they regarded him as an outsider when it came to temple ordinances. Therefore, in their minds, he had no authority to overturn the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves.

The religious leaders of Christ's day did not understand that the inside (their inner motives) had to be examined and cleansed accordingly; not the outside (physical cleansing) through the blood of animals sprinkled on the altar,

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of violent greed and lack self-control.²⁶ "Blind Pharisee; first clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside of it may also become clean (Mt. 23:25-26; RNT).

During the days leading up to the Passover, when Christ was examining the inside of his own cup, which included periodic "fasting" (Mt. 4:2; Mk. 11:12-13; Jn. 4:31-34), the Pharisees were allowing business as usual around God's temple, and planning how they could get rid of the Christ,

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the courtyard of the high priest, the one called Caiaphas, ⁴and they counseled together to seize Jesus by deceit, and kill *him* (Mt. 26:3-4; RNT).

If the Jewish religious leadership's focus had been on cleansing themselves inwardly coming up to the Passover, they would have realized that they needed to repent of the spirit of murder,

I (Christ) know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you (Jn. 8:37; NKJV).

You (religious leaders) are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning... (Jn. 8:44; NKJV).

The apostle Paul pointed out that the physical temple was both temporary and only a type, or pattern (Heb. 8:5), of the real temple of God, which is a spiritual house consisting of many members,

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1Cor. 3:16-17; NKJV).

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own (1Cor. 6:19; NKJV).

And what accord has Christ with Belial (pagan deity)? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we (true Christians) are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be My people" (2Cor. 6:15-16; NKJV, comments added in parentheses).

Now, therefore, you (church members) are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building (spiritual structure), being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord... (Eph. 2:19-21; NKJV, comments added in parentheses).

Although the physical temple was to be cleansed during the period of time from the first day of the first month until the Passover, it was a shadow of what was really to be cleansed (Heb. 8:5). The temple of God is now composed of those who have repented of sin and are diligently applying themselves to live a new life of obedience to God's law (Rom. 6:4; 7:6). Therefore, the real cleansing is not limited to a physical structure at all.

Instead, those comprising God's temple today are to be examining themselves during the period from the first day of the first month until they partake of the New Covenant Passover meal,

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner (at the Passover meal) will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. **But let a man**

(person) examine himself (themselves), and so let them eat of that bread and drink that cup (1Cor. 11:27-28; NKJV, comments in parentheses and emphasis added).

Unfortunately, this self-examination did not produce positive results when Cain was advised to do so. It was pointed out to Cain that his manner of worship was not accepted because he did not follow instructions that were given to him,

...and the Lord respected Abel and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well (according to the instructions given to you), will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:4-7; NKJV).

Cain harbored a spirit of murder toward his brother, and he did not examine himself and repent of this attitude. The religious leadership during Christ's time was no different than Cain. They had the time to repent had their focus been on their own temple (themselves), but they clearly did not,

Snakes! Offspring of vipers! How will you flee from the "judgment of Gehenna?"³⁴ "Because of this, behold, I send toward you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of them you will kill and nail to stakes and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues; and you will persecute them from city to city."³⁵ "so that all the righteous blood poured out on the earth might come upon you, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachiah who was murdered between the naos and the place of sacrifice (Mt. 23:33-35; RNT).

True Christians need to take the time leading up to the New Covenant Passover meal to examine themselves and ask the only true God to help them see those areas in their lives, and attitudes, that need to be dealt with so they do not continue to live with sin, which is the transgression of God's law (1Jn. 3:4),

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Rom. 6:1-2; NKJV)

The days leading up to the Passover are extremely valuable for self-examination, and can make a huge difference in maintaining the same attitude that true Christians had when they first realized their sin and repented, which preceded their baptism,

(Christ) who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify (cleanse) for himself his own special people, **zealous for good works** (Ti. 2:14; NKJV, comments in parentheses and emphasis added).

The period commencing on the first of the first month is a time for self-examination, with the goal of becoming more dedicated and effective in doing God's work. Failure to use this time effectively, could result in a loss of commitment to God's work,

I know your works, that you are neither cold or hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth (Rev. 3:15-16; NKJV).

Do not quench the Spirit (1Thes. 5:19; NKJV).

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*.² For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,³ how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Heb. 2:1-3a; NASB)

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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