

The Holy Sacrifice Of The Mass Part XIV

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Herod's Great Bridge

The apostles wondered where they were to hold the feast, and while crossing the great bridge they turn to Jesus. 'Whither wilt thou that we go and prepare to eat the pasch?' And he said to Peter and John, 'Go and prepare us the pasch that we may eat.' But they said: 'Whither wilt thou that we prepare?' And he said to them, 'Behold as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water, follow him into the house, which he entereth, and you shall say to the master of the house, say to him the Master saith, 'My time is near at hand. I will keep the pasch at thy house with My disciples. 'The Master saith to thee, 'Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the pasch with My disciples?' 'And he will show you a large dining-room furnished, and there prepare for us.' And his disciples went their way and came into the city, and they found as He had told them, and they prepared the pasch.

They were crossing the bridge when Jesus sent his two chief apostles on ahead. Herod the Great had built this bridge to replace the one Solomon had stretched across the Tyropoeon vale separating Moriah from Sion. In the middle of the valley far below, separating the sacred hills within the Holy City, then ran north and south the Cheesemongers' Street, where farmers gathered on Mondays, Thursdays and feasts to sell their produce. The bridge was of the yellow limestone of Judea, 125 feet over the street, supported by arches 41 1/2 feet wide east and west by 50 feet, the width of the bridge, which was 350 feet long, uniting Moriah and Sion, its eastern end debouching into the southern part of the Temple area. Some of the stones were from 20 to 40 feet long, weighing over 109 tons. The writer measured one of the stones laid by Solomon in the Temple foundations near where this bridge ended, and found it 17 1/2 long and three feet high-how far it extended into the wall he could not tell. The broken eastern abutment of the fallen bridge is now called "Robinson's Arch"

Peter And John Sent To Secure A Room

Peter and John hurried ahead, crossed the bridge to David Street, turned south, passed Annas' and Caiphas' palaces, and near the Sion Gate they met the man with a pitcher of the "Water of Precept," for the Passover. The man, whose name is not given by any writer, had drawn that water from a well dug deep down in the limestone rock at the eastern end of a bridge the high priests had stretched over the Cedron brook a little south of Gethsemane where the well may still be seen.

The man was bringing that water to the Cenacle to mix with the flour for the Passover cakes. To him they told the Master's message, then they followed him to the tomb of David, and told the keeper of the Cenacle what the Lord had directed them to say.

Jerusalem belonged to all the people of Israel. The line dividing the lands of Juda's tribe from the Benjamites passed through the center of the Temple, and continued westward till it divided Calvary at the spot where next day stood the cross. This division was made so no tribe could claim the Holy City as its own property. Whence no one owned a house in Jerusalem, for it belonged to all the tribes. The families who lived in the houses had only the right of occupation. They were forbidden to rent a house, and dwelling-houses and lands were given by lot. At the Passover, every house was open to the strangers, no one was ever refused bed and board at this time, and hospitality was boundless during the feasts. The man who would refuse a Passover pilgrim the use of his house would expose his family to the execration of the whole population.

The celebrated Chamber over the tombs of the kings, the Greeks called Anageon, the Hebrews Aliyah, meaning "High," or "Beautiful," and the Romans, the Cenacle, "The Banquet Hall." St. Luke's Greek Gospel has the words: "And he will show you the great Cenacle furnished, there prepare." The word is estromenon "furnished," and the words mean the same as what we say when we speak of "a furnished house "ready to be occupied. The Cenacle or upper chamber had the Bema or sanctuary for the synagogue services, the Aaron with the sacred Scrolls, the hanging lamb before the Law,

the candles on the ark, the seven-branched candlestick, the pulpit, the table in the middle of the chamber, the couches on which to recline and all things required for the great feast of Israel.

The Apostles Obtain The Upper Chamber

The Cenacle was filled with people preparing for the feast, and according to the custom, entering the two apostles said: Shalom Lachem, "Peace to you," or "Peace be with this house" and the people replied "May your heart be enlarged. This was the Marahaba of the Hebrews, the Alaic of the Talmud, the Shelama of the ancient days of Melchisedech and Abraham, the name the former called Sion, Salem, "Peace," the greeting of friends as we say: "How do you do?" They used to greet each other with the words: "Peace be with you," as the pontificating bishop says to the people, or "The Lord be with you," as the priest says seven times during Mass sending the Holy Spirit to the people with his sevenfold gifts, - the greetings going back, in sentiment at least, to the days when the great high priest Melchisedech founded Jerusalem.

To the keeper of the Cenacle the apostles delivered the Master's message. Christ was the Prince of the House of David, heir of the great kings sleeping in the rocky tombs beneath, and the palace belonged to His family. Through His Mother He was the direct representative of David's royal family, had the highest title to the building and that was the reason that the Cenacle was given Him in which to celebrate the feast with His apostles.

All in the place gather round the two apostles, for this day of the Passover, stranger was more honored than the master of the house. For days they had been preparing for the great feast. They had cleaned and washed the floors of the great Cenacle Hall, wherein synagogue Sabbath and feasts had been celebrated since Herod had built the great Chamber over the tombs of Juda's famous kings. Peter and John, following their Master's words, "And there prepare for us," went to work helping in the Passover preparations.

How The Passover Victim Was Prepared

The Master, surrounded by his ten apostles, soon came with the sacrificed, skinned lamb, rolled in its skin on his shoulders, while the others carried the flour, wine, bitter herbs, salt, vinegar, apples, nuts, almonds, candles and things required for the feast. At the door the Lord gave the lamb's skin to the keeper of the Cenacle, according to the custom.

They laid the lamb on a table, and drove a stick of pomegranate wood, called mechna, through his body, along the backbone and through the tendons of his hind feet. Carefully they open out the chest, as butchers still sometimes do, and place another stick of the same wood into the tendons and small bones of the forefeet, opening out the body so it will better roast.

They are very careful not to break a bone, or they will be punished with thirty-nine stripes. 'This was the way the lamb was crucified down the ages since Moses' day to prophesy the body of the dead crucified Christ hanging by the nails through His feet and hands. The Jews not wishing to see such a striking emblem of the dead Christ, left these details out of the Talmud. But the early writers mention the crucified lamb and how it was prepared.

Carefully they carry the lamb out into the yard, and place it in the earthenware oven shaped like ancient round beehive, and filled with burning charcoal. They rested the lamb entirely on his cross because Jesus the next day hung entirely from the nails. If any part of the lamb touched the sides or door of the oven it was cut off as being unclean.

One stood by and turned the lamb, so the flesh might be well roasted. The fire penetrates all parts, as the fire of the Holy Ghost filled Christ, inspiring Him with the love of all mankind, moving Him to die for our salvation. The roasted, skinned lamb looked when done like the dead body of Christ, His skin torn off with scourges, His wounds yellow with dried serum. When He lay dead his body looked as though it had been roasted. Thus was the victim of the Passover prepared, sacrificed, skinned, crucified, roasted and eaten, down the ages, to foretell the Lord condemned to death, arrested, scourged, crucified and partaken in the Eucharist.

What The Preparations Symbolized

With the “water of precept,” the man had drawn from the deep well in the Cedron valley, the women mix flour and make a dough they call the Mazzoth. They roll the mass as thin as possible into four cakes called ashishah, each as large as a dinner-plate. They imprint in them with their fingers five holes, challoth, as they thought to make them bake better, not knowing they foretold the five wounds in the Lord’s body when he was dead.

Perhaps these five finger-marks of the Passover cakes give rise to the figures on our altar-breads. The best examples we now see of these unleaven cakes are the altar breads used in churches of the Latin Rite. Biscuits “twice baked,” crackers, etc., are made somewhat like the unleaven bread and have designs like these ancient cakes.

They prepare the three tables and the table linens, for three cloths were spread over the cross table, the ends hanging down to the floor, as you will see the ends of the upper of the three altar cloths hangs down.

They get ready the candlesticks for the beeswax candles, for no religious services was ever carried out in Israel without these candles to remind them of the Messiah foretold to come and enlighten them with His teachings. Some not going deeply into Jewish rites think the candles on our altars came from the Catacombs. But the early Christians of Rome when using martyrs’ tombs as altars placed the candles on them because it was the custom at the Jewish Passover and because they were used at the Last Supper.

When the four cakes are baked, they anoint them with olive oil in the form of the Greek cross, according to the ancient custom, to make them emblematic of the expected Messiah, in Hebrew “The Anointed,” in Greek “The Christ.” These cakes were made generally the day before, each of the four cakes being called kiccar, “circle.” One cake called the challah, “tithe of the dough,” or matanoth they sent to the Temple priests as an offering. The other three cakes they sprinkled with incense’ to represent the Lord’s body prepared with incense for the tomb.

Decorations Of The Upper Chamber

They mix sage, raisins, chestnuts, figs, apples, vinegar, etc., which they pound in a mortar and form into a kind of salad they called the chaseroth, to remind them of the mortar their fathers were forced to make in Egypt under the Pharaohs. This is the way the dish is prepared in our day. They used also eggs, Zis Sadai, and meat to remind them of the Leviathan, “the elephant,” and the “Behemoth.” Many strange fictions the Talmud gives of these animals.

They prepare the couches round the tables for the members of the “band,” called mesabbim, “the recliners,” and get ready all things required for this great feast of Israel, of which Moses wrote: “Butter of the herd, and milk of the sheep, with the fat of lambs, and of the rams, of the breed of Basan, and goats, with the marrow of wheat, and might drink the purest blood of the grape.”

On the table they place terra cotta lamps, and beeswax candles, for the feast takes place at night, and they must have light to read the words of the Passover Seder, “Section.” They decorate the table with vases of flowers, and these are still continued in the candles and decorations of our altars 6 Two flagons, one of wine, the other of water, are on a small table on the left of the Master’s place, but on your right, for the Master faced the congregation, this table being in memory of the gold table in the Holies of the Temple, on which rested the twelve cakes and twelve gold flasks of the wine of proposition.

They adorn the walls of the Cenacle with green bows, palm branches, and costly curtains, in remembrance of the thirteen veils of the Temple. On the floor they spread the rare rugs of Persia, with carpets cover the stone floor? They set the table with the bachelimnaim “beautiful vases” or “dishes,” but before the Master’s place is a large plate for the three cakes, and another for the chasoreth.

The Candles Of Passover And The Mass

With fire from the ever-burning lamp, hanging before the Holy Scrolls, the Pentateuch, which the Jews call the Torah, “The Law,” they light the lamps of the sevenbranched candlestick in the Bema, the candles on the table, and the

other candles round the room. This is the reason that candles burn on the walls of a church during its dedication ceremonies. They light each candle with the words:

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to kindle the festival lights.”

How many candles did they light? After sundown each Friday of Sabbath eve, and on the Passover they lighted six lamps or candles. To each lamp or candle they held out the hands and prayed for the repose of the souls of the dead. The Jews of that day piously believed that while the candles of Sabbath and feast burned, God allowed the souls in purgatory to cool themselves in cold water, remaining there while the candles burned. We conclude therefore that six wax candles burned at the Last Supper, and these are continued in the six candles of Pontifical and High Mass.

The women lighted lamps and candles in that day, because, as the Jews say, the men were occupied with the preparations outside, while the women prepared within. They give another queer reason the reader may accept or not. When Eve offered Adam the apple and he refused to eat, she struck him and beat him with rods till he agreed to eat the forbidden fruit, which brought such misfortunes on the race. Therefore, women had to light the lights as a sign of the prophesied Seed of the woman, who would come to enlighten the world with his teachings. The women covered the table with its three linen cloths, chalices and dishes. On one dish they put the three cakes of unfermented bread, one in memory of the manna of their fathers, the second cake to remind them of the double portion which fell on the Sabbath, and the third was for the Passover feast.

According to immemorial custom copied from the Temple, each took a bath before beginning the Passover. The bath was emblematic of innocence of soul required to eat the Lamb in Communion, and prophetic of Christian baptism. The Rabbis of that time practised three kinds of bathing, for the Wilderness bath using five and a half gallons of water, taking the Jerusalem bath with eight and a half gallons and the Sepphoris, “The Legal Bath,” with sometimes sixty

gallons. Stone jars, called metretes, translated in the King James Bible as “firkins,” held the water.

The First And Second Vespers

This was the reason that Jesus said at supper, “He that is washed needeth but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly: and you are clean, but not all. For He knew who would betray Him.” Their feet had become soiled in walking over the floors, and by a play of words Christ applied the bath to the innocence of soul all had, but Judas with murder in his mind, for he had made an agreement with the priests to deliver up to them his Master that they might inflict on Him a horrible death.

The Passover began at Ben aharbaim, “Between the two vespers,” according to the words of God to Moses, giving place and time, “In the place, which the Lord shall choose that His name may dwell there, thou shalt immolate the Passover in the evening, at the going down of the sun, at which time thou tamest out of Egypt.” The Hebrew has “between the two vespers.”

What is the meaning of “the first” and “the second” vespers? The Jews of that time called the afternoon, that is after three o’clock, when the lamb was sacrificed, the “first vespers,” and in our Gospel the words are translated “evening.” During this “first vespers,” the Lord fed the multitude with the miraculous loaves and fishes, and in the “second vespers” he went to pray. Writers disagree regarding the exact time when the “second” vespers began, but the most probable opinion is that of Rabbi Aben Esra, quoted in the Talmud, that it was between sunset and darkness, that is, in the gloaming these second vespers began. The first night of the Passover, therefore when darkness fell on the earth, the Jews began the Passover prayers in the synagogues in the time of Christ. The Jews of our day do not begin the Passover till it is dark. Now let us see these prayers and ceremonies in the Cenacle.

To Be Cont’d.