

Feasting Among the People of God

Introduction:

1. This week, in our country, millions of people will come together for Thanksgiving.
2. Families and friends will gather. Food will be prepared and we will all feast together.
3. The history of Thanksgiving is often traced back to the days of the Pilgrims of Plymouth, MA, a religious group seeking separation from the Anglican Church.
4. According to William Bradford, in 1623 they had a particularly abundant harvest and set aside a time for giving thanks.
5. In 1863, during the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving and Praise “to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”
6. From ancient times feasting has been a part of the life of God’s people.
 - a. The Passover feast was established during the days of Israel’s slavery in Egypt.
 - b. Various other feasts characterized the traditions of Israel—the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Pentecost were among the most prominent.
 - c. In the N.T. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Later He miraculously feed 5,000 men and then again 4,000.
 - d. Later, He established the memorial feast that we have just celebrated involving bread and fruit of the vine.
 - e. Then there is another feast described in both the O.T. and the N.T. It is a feast to surpass all feasts. It is a Messianic wedding feast that God is preparing for His son and His bride.
7. In these biblical feasts there are some common themes. In this lesson we will talk about what they are and of their significance for us.

Discussion:

I. The Passover feast was associated with the culmination of the ten plagues and Israel’s escape from Egypt (Ex. 12).

- A. It was a feast instituted by God.
 1. A lamb was to be slaughtered.
 - a. The blood was to be put on the door posts and on the lintel of each house of the Israelites.
 - b. As the death angel passed through Egypt to destroy the first-born in each household he would pass over those with the blood of the lamb on the door posts and lintel.
 - c. They were to eat the flesh of the lamb that night, after it had been roasted with fire.
 - d. They were to eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.
 - e. They were to be dressed ready to depart from Egypt.
 2. This was established as a permanent ordinance by God.
 - a. Throughout the generations of Israelites they were to practice this.
 - b. It was a memorial feast, a reminder to coming generations of how God delivered them from the Egyptians and passed over them without destroying their firstborn ones.

3. It is a tradition still celebrated in many modern Jewish homes.
- B. 1 Cor. 5:7 refers to Christ being our Passover sacrifice and reasons that we cannot allow sin's leavening influence to cause corruption among the people of God. Thus we cannot associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Instead he must be removed.
- C. The O.T. Passover feast prefigured Christ, our Passover.
 1. Passover reflects God's provision for His people.
 2. It calls attention to His willingness to deliver them from bondage (Egypt, sin).
 3. Celebrating the Passover reflected the people's willingness to acknowledge God and the provision that He made for them.
 4. While I can find no specific mention of thanksgiving associated with the Passover in Scripture, it would seem that it would be a natural element of it.
 - a. When God provides. . .
 - b. Men should be thankful. Especially when He provides them with deliverance from slavery and death!
 - c. Our God has delivered us from slavery to sin. He has granted us life by the sacrifice of our Passover lamb, Jesus Christ. Is it not appropriate that thanks giving be a part of the life of the people of God??

II. Recently we have studied about the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 in Matthew's gospel (14:15-21; 15:32-38).

- A. There are many observations that we could make about these two miraculous events.
 1. Jesus felt compassion for the people.
 2. He fed them.
 3. The feeding of the 5,000 occurs in the Jewish district (cf. 13:53) and the feeding of the 4,000 occurs in the Decapolis, (Mk. 7:31ff) a Gentile region. Jesus feeds both Jews and Gentiles. Probably implications in this for the inclusion of Gentiles in the blessings of God.
- B. One of the interesting things about these two events is that there is a pattern followed by Jesus in both instances.
 1. He "takes (*lambanō*)" (14:19; 15:36).
 2. He "blesses (*eulogeō*)/gives thanks (*eucharisteō*)" (14:19; 15:36).
 3. He "broke (*klaō*)" (14:19; 15:36).
 4. He "gave (*didōmi*)" (14:19; 15:36).
- C. This is the same sequence of events (and the same verbs) as when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-27; Mk. 14:22-23; Lk. 22:19-20). Same in Lk. 24:30-31.

Similar in 1 Cor. 11:23-25, but "giving" is not specifically expressed.
- D. The consideration here is that God provided and therefore expressing thanksgiving was appropriate. Three questions confront us.
 1. Do we recognize God is the provider?
 2. Are we thankful?
 3. Do we express it?

III. In 1 Cor. 11:20-28 Paul rebukes the Corinthians concerning their observance of the Lord's Supper.

- A. It is a feast designed in remembrance of the Lord. That is, it reflects upon the provision that God has made for us through Him.
- B. In it we proclaim the Lord's death. Thanksgiving, respect, honor should be associated with it.
- C. The Corinthians have turned it into something quite incongruous with this (20-22).
 - 1. Thanksgiving, respect and honor associated with the Lord's Supper should be evident in our treatment of one another.
 - 2. It obviously should not be disrespected by drunkenness.
 - 3. Shaming of those who have nothing is certainly inappropriate.
- D. What attitudes do you bring to the Lord's Supper? Is thankfulness the predominate tone?
- E. The Lord's Supper is not about eating and drinking. It is not about have a dinner party. It is not about our lavish consumption. It is about the provision that God has made and our reaction to it. That reaction should be manifest to others in our following the precedent set by God of provision for others.

IV. There is a lavish wedding feast that God is preparing (Isa. 25:6-9).

- A. Four things about this feast.
 - 1. It is for all peoples (25:6).
 - 2. It involves a revelation (25:7).
 - 3. Death will be swallowed up and tears will be wiped away (25:8).
 - 4. There will be rejoicing in God's salvation (25:9).
- B. Matt. 22:1-10 describes the wedding feast in parabolic language.
 - 1. The parable is reflective of the typical Jewish wedding traditions of the day.
 - 2. The bridegroom came and was betrothed to the bride.
 - 3. He went away, returning to his father's house (cf. Matt. 25:1-13).
 - 4. The wedding party waited for his return, at which time he took the bride to be with him.
- C. This is the context of what Jesus says in Jn. 14:2ff: "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there you may be also."
- D. This is the wedding feast that is described in Rev. 19:7-8. Perhaps it would be good for us give attention to this feast whenever we eat that each day our direction and purpose might be clear.

Conclusion:

- 1. This week we will give thanks to God for our food, the wonderful bounty that God has provided us. It is most appropriate that we do so.

2. But in all our lavish consumption and our rejoicing in what God has given let's remember the lesson that God taught Israel in Deut. 8.
3. "He humbled you and let you be hungry," Moses said, and fed you on manna . . . that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4).
4. When you are thankful this Thanksgiving, be thankful for what you eat, but remember the true Bread of Life.