

ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:1-4, 6-13).

The foolish virgins expected that they could borrow oil from others. To their sorrow, they learned that they were individually responsible for their circumstances and had not prepared themselves. As I conclude this part of my service in the Church, it is my prayer that each of us will be wise enough to live lives that will cause us to be found among those referred to in this scripture:

"And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

"For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.

"And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation.

"For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver" (D&C 45:56-59). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Howard W. Hunter, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us. He will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Howard W. Hunter

Passover and Easter

I believe it is safe to say that Passover is without equal in the Jewish calendar of celebrations. It is the oldest of the Jewish festivals, celebrating an event in advance of receiving the traditional Mosaic Law. It reminds every generation of the return of the children of Israel to the promised land and of the great travail in Egypt which preceded it. It commemorates the passage of a people from subjection and bondage to freedom and deliverance. It is the Old Testament festival of springtime when the world of nature awakens to life, growth, and fruition.

Passover is linked with the Christian observance of Easter which we celebrate this weekend in this great conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Passover in the Old Testament and Easter in

the New Testament testify of the great gift God has given and of the sacrifice that was involved in its bestowal. Both of these great religious commemorations declare that death would "pass over" us and could have no permanent power upon us, and that the grave would have no victory.

Plagues in Egypt

In delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt, Jehovah himself spoke to Moses out of the burning bush at Sinai saying:

"I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. . . .

"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children

of Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:7, 10).

Because Pharaoh was unyielding, many plagues were brought upon Egypt, but still "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go" (Exodus 9:35).

In response to that refusal by Pharaoh, the Lord said, "And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts" (Exodus 11:5).

As a protection against this last and most terrible punishment inflicted upon the Egyptians, the Lord instructed Moses to have the children of Israel take to them every man a lamb without blemish.

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

"And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. . . .

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover. . . .

"And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

"That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt" (Exodus 12:7-8, 11, 26-27).

Boy Jesus in the temple

After the Israelites had escaped from Pharaoh's grasp and death came to the firstborn of the Egyptians, the Israelites eventually crossed over Jordan. It is recorded that "the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho" (Joshua 5:10). And so it was with Jewish families year after year thereafter,

including the family of Joseph and Mary and the young boy, Jesus.

When Jesus was but twelve years old, he went to Jerusalem with his parents to take part in the Passover celebration. Luke's account tells us that Jesus remained behind in the temple after his parents had departed for home. They returned with fear and anxiety to find him among the doctors of the law "both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). Luke records that all who "heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:47).

Could it have been possible that Jesus was teaching these older and formally trained men about the meaning of the Passover just celebrated? Would it have surprised them that one so young and seemingly inexperienced would have known so much about the meaning of that fateful night in Egypt so long ago and so far away? Would they have been amazed at his knowledge of the lamb and the blood and the firstborn and the sacrifice? The scriptures are silent on such questions.

Passovers during Christ's ministry

As the Gospel of John makes clear, the feast of the Passover marked significant milestones during the mortal ministry of Christ. At the first Passover in his ministry, Jesus made his mission known by purifying the temple when he drove from its portals the money changers and those who sold animals. In the second Passover Jesus manifested his power by the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Christ here introduced the symbols that would later have even greater meaning in the Upper Room. "I am the bread of life," he said. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Jesus' last Passover

Of course, it would be the feast of his last Passover that would give full expression to this ancient celebration.

By that final week of his mortal ministry, Jesus knew clearly what this particular Passover would mean to him. Trouble was already in the air. Matthew records:

"When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matthew 26:1-2).

Knowing full well what awaited him, Jesus asked Peter and John to make arrangements for the paschal meal. He told them to ask of the master of a local house, "Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" (Luke 22:11).

The loneliness of his birth was to be, in a sense, duplicated in the loneliness of his death. Foxes had holes and birds had nests, but the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head either in his nativity or in his last hours of mortality.

Finally, preparations for the Passover meal were complete, in keeping with nearly fifteen hundred years of tradition. Jesus sat down with his disciples and, after the eating of the sacrificial lamb and of the bread and wine of this ancient feast, he taught them a newer and holier meaning of that ancient blessing from God.

He took one of the flat, round loaves of unleavened bread, said the blessing over it, and broke it into pieces that he distributed to the Apostles, saying: "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

As the cup was being poured, he took it and, giving thanks, invited them to drink of it, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). Paul said of it: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The bread and wine, rather than the animals and herbs, would become

emblems of the great Lamb's body and blood, emblems to be eaten and drunk reverently and in remembrance of him forever.

In this simple but impressive manner the Savior instituted the ordinance now known as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. With the suffering of Gethsemane, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the resurrection from a garden tomb, Jesus fulfilled the ancient law and ushered in a new dispensation based on a higher, holier understanding of the law of sacrifice. No more would men be required to offer the firstborn lamb from their flock, because the Firstborn of God had come to offer himself as an "infinite and eternal sacrifice."

Gift of eternal life

This is the majesty of the Atonement and Resurrection, not just a pass-over from death, but a gift of eternal life by an infinite sacrifice as so beautifully stated by Amulek:

"For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10).

At this Easter season, I bear testimony of the Firstborn of God, who made that sacrifice, who has "borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," who "was wounded for our transgressions" and "was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:4-5). Of the divine nature of this Redeemer and Savior of all mankind I testify, in his name, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

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