

**The Passover Substitute**  
**Exodus 12:1-14, Luke 22:7-20**

Back in 2004 Morgan Spurlock, an independent film maker, conducted an experiment on what he ate and made a documentary movie about it.

For one month Morgan would substitute the food from his regular diet with food from McDonald's - for breakfast, lunch and dinner. He would make sure that he eventually ate everything on the menu, and he would take the supersize option whenever it was offered to him.

Accordingly the documentary film was called "Supersize Me"

Now at the beginning of the experiment Morgan's health was above average and he was in good shape for a 32 year old male.

But... upon completion of this one month substitution experiment he had gained 24½ lbs of fat, even accumulating

fat on his organs and his cholesterol level increased to 230, which is getting into the danger zone.

To regain his health and get back to normal he had to follow a specially supervised vegan diet for fourteen months.

Now, in designing this experiment Morgan anticipated that he would gain weight and that it would affect things like cholesterol, however he also experienced mood swings and sexual dysfunction.

The point is friends – our food affects us doesn't it? Physically, mentally, emotionally and dare I say even spiritually?

And I say spiritually as well, because the scriptures reveal to us that we live with the effects of Adam and Eve's experiment to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had expressly forbidden.

But it looked like it was nutritious and delicious, it was aesthetically pleasing – maybe a nice shape and color and eating it would make you wise, so... Eve took some and ate it.

And she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it – and we know what happened as a result.

So food is more than just food isn't it... in fact we often say "you are what you eat?" don't we...

At that is why friends, God gave His people a special meal, because He wants those who belong to him to be like him.

Because food isn't just food - and when God serves his people a meal it reminds them of their special relationship with God and the implications it has for their day to day lives.

So how did the Passover meal function in this way for the people of Israel?

Well friends this meal was a reminder that the LORD God had remembered the promise and the covenant he had made with their ancestor Abraham.

God had told Abraham he would have many descendants; that they would become a great nation. He told him that they would experience slavery in a foreign land, but that He would deliver them and bring them to a land of their own – the land He showed to Abraham when He made this promise. (Ex 15:13-14)

This meal was also a reminder of how God had kept that promise when He delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt.

The main dish of the Passover was a year-old male lamb which had been sacrificed. The blood of that lamb had been painted on the doorframes of their homes.

So when God sent the avenging angel for the 10<sup>th</sup> plague - to strike down the first born of every Egyptian family as punishment for enslaving his people, the avenging angel

would see the blood of the lamb and he would pass-over that home.

In this meal they ate bitter herbs with the roasted lamb, to remind them of the bitterness of being slaves, and they ate bread made without yeast...

Bread that didn't take long to make or cook because once God's judgment had come, they would need to leave in a hurry.

So they ate this meal after dark, dressed in their cloaks and with their walking sticks in hand, waiting for God's deliverance to occur, ready to go at a moment's notice.

This is how God delivered them. So God instructed them to continue to eat this meal every year, in this manner, to commemorate the date of their deliverance and to remember what it was like.

This was so that future generations would experience and understand and be shaped by this deliverance from slavery, and be grateful for how God had protected Israel from the judgment sent upon the Egyptians.

So Friends, you are what you eat – and Israel's identity, who they are, was to be formed by eating this meal every year.

However, in spite of having experienced all this and eating this meal...the nation of Israel was often rebellious and disobedient, taking God's blessings for granted and substituting the Passover meal for "having dinner" with other gods instead.

*The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to arouse my anger. (Jeremiah 7:18)*

You see even though they had been set free from slavery in Egypt their hearts were still in captivity to sin and rebellion,

which we have all inherited as consequence of Adam and Eve's fateful meal.

So friends, Israel's hearts... our heart's... they all need to be set free from that slavery to sin, need to be delivered from the hunger we have for what isn't on God's menu.

And we know what that is like don't we... trying to stay away from sin is like having to forgo the food which affects our health.

Now in our struggle with food – wouldn't it be amazing if someone else was able to diet for us?

Wouldn't it be awesome if someone else would be able to eat and drink and stick to that healthy diet on our behalf, and then just by being around them it would rub off and transfer to us?

That would be amazing – well friends, the good news is that when it comes to sin, that's what Jesus Christ does for us. He

is our everyday substitute, and he uses food and drink terminology to drive home the point of how that works in our relationship with him.

Listen to how Jesus described himself to his fellow Israelites "*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)*

*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. (John 6:54)*

Now friends, I know what Jesus says here sounds strange to us, even barbaric perhaps. But the reason Jesus speaks like this about himself because he is planning to become the substitute for the Passover meal – the Passover substitute.

And that is what we see happening in Luke 22 – Jesus is going to show his disciples what it means for him to be the Passover Substitute. So in preparation He tells Peter and John to go and get everything ready for the meal as they normally would.

However, we need to understand that in order for this substitution to occur – it must be done willingly.

So Jesus has to take precautions to protect the location of where He will celebrate the Passover with his disciples because He knows that the religious leaders have decided they want to kill him.

He has become a threat to their power that needs to be eliminated, but they were unable to do this publically for fear of the reaction of the crowds who followed him.

Additionally Jesus faces betrayal from his own disciples. He knows that Judas has agreed to betray Him to the religious leaders.

Luke 22:6 says that Judas was watching *“for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them [religious leaders] when no crowd was present.”*

What better opportunity would there be than when Jesus and his disciples were all by themselves celebrating the Passover meal.

So Jesus, in His sovereignty, instructs Peter and John to simply *“Go enter the city, you’ll meet a man carrying a jar of water, follow him, just tell the owner of the house ‘the Teacher asks where is the guest room, etc...”*

This ensures they will have an anonymous location for the Passover meal, and that their time together will be uninterrupted, in order for Jesus to instruct his disciples about how He becomes the substitute for the Passover,

and most importantly so that Jesus can surrender himself to the religious leaders at a time of his choosing.

You see friends in order for Jesus to be the Passover substitute his death must be a willing sacrifice, not a political assassination.

Jesus is going to willingly offer himself in his death on the cross as the Passover Lamb, so that his blood can spare human beings from the judgment which God must bring upon the sin which holds us captive.

Jesus needs to explain this important part of his ministry to his disciples who still think Jesus has come to be the political substitute.

This is why Jesus says to them when they have gathered together – *“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you **before** I suffer” (vs. 15)*

And because He is about to offer himself up willingly to suffer and to go to his death...

Jesus says this will be his last Passover meal. He won't eat and drink again until the Passover meal is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

What does Jesus mean by this?

Well when the time comes for the final judgment, when the Kingdom of God comes in fulfillment, those who believe in Jesus will be protected by his blood and they will enter into his Kingdom - the new heavens and new earth. God's final punishment for sin will pass-over them.

And when this occurs there will be a great celebration – and any great celebration has food!

So the Kingdom of Heaven will be like a wedding banquet Jesus says in Matt 22:1-14, and in Revelation 19:9 this celebration is called *“the wedding feast of the Lamb”*

So this Passover is Jesus' last Passover until the ultimate Passover – the Wedding feast of the Lamb takes place when the Kingdom comes to earth – and Jesus himself, the Passover Lamb will eat with us again.

But until that day comes, God's people need to be reminded that Jesus offered himself as the Passover lamb, they need a way to be reassured that Christ's blood forgives their sins, that

when God's Kingdom comes they will be pass-over by the judgment.

So Jesus takes the Passover meal God gave to his people and He gives it new meaning and new significance for them and Jesus turns it into the Lord's Supper

To do this, Jesus takes some bread from the Passover meal, gives thanks for it and he breaks it – just like his body would be broken on the cross.

This is my body he says to them...given for you. Break bread and eat it together to remember that I am the sacrifice for your sin.

When we eat the bread of the Lord's Supper we are reminded, we are deeply reassured... that our sins have been forgiven by Christ's death on the cross.

But the Lord's supper is more than just a memorial dinner. Are we able to remember well enough, good enough, deep

enough etc... so that it is by our efforts that the Lord's Supper accomplishes what Christ intended it to? No.

So today as we celebrate Pentecost, it is appropriate to highlight that it is the work of the Holy Spirit who takes this ordinary bread and makes it something that nourishes our faith and trust in Jesus as our sacrificial substitute.

And through eating the bread of the Lord's supper – in Faith that the Holy Spirit works this way – we are receiving more and more of Jesus and the new life that He gives us.

Not by magic, or superstition, but because the Holy Spirit is at work in the supper that Jesus himself gave us and we receive it by faith – not magic or superstition – by faith.

And then after he explains the bread, Jesus takes a cup of wine, gives thanks for it and declares something astounding – this is the **new covenant** in my blood – and it is for you!

Drink it...

Friends, to truly understand what Jesus is doing we need to understand how blood had been previously used to seal the Covenant... In Exodus 24:7-8 it says...

*“Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.”*

*Moses then took the blood, [from the sacrifices made] sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”*

When Jesus takes the cup and proclaims a new covenant in his blood He is pressing the reset button for the old covenant.

The old covenant had been broken because Israel had been an unfaithful partner.

However God was not ready to give up on his people... he sent Jesus to start a new covenant, to be a new partner on their behalf – as the Passover substitute.

His blood would spare Israel and us from the punishment of being unfaithful covenant partners with God – it would cause that judgment to pass-over.

So when we drink the cup of the Lord’s Supper... friends we receive all the benefits of Christ being a faithful covenant partner with God and none of the judgment that we deserve.

In the same way that the Holy Spirit causes the bread to nourish our faith, He turns the cup into the blood of Christ for us – and we drink it in faith, regularly to help us trust and believe that Christ’s blood was shed once and for all to forgive our sins – past, present, and future!

So thank God for the Passover Substitute - the Lamb which God provided – Jesus Christ, and we thank Jesus Christ for pouring out the Holy Spirit –by which we benefit from eating and drinking in Faith.



So friends, I wonder with this deeper and better understanding of the Passover and Lord's Supper if you might be willing to try your own substitution experiment?

We live in a culture and among a people who are caught up trying to pursue "the good life," because intuitively we seem to know that health is good, exercise is good, eating right is good and leads to a better more enjoyable life...

But this good life is not being pursued as a means by which we worship God and live our lives in gratitude to him – as faithful covenant partners...

It is yet another example of a good thing becoming a god thing, a means by which we politely rebel against our Creator and proclaim our own ability to live well and experience life to its fullest...

But friends as our Lord so wisely says in Mark 8:36 *"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"*

Friends, are you willing to substitute seeking the good life for receiving eternal life? Jesus said *"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."* (John 6:54)

Brothers and sisters, ask yourself – what is it that am I doing to try and seek the best life that I can have?

And when you come to eat at the Lord's table – bring those efforts so that you can swap them out and receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ instead; substitute your good life for Christ's everlasting and eternal life.

Then your exercising, good eating, hard work and wise living is transformed by the Holy Spirit into responses of gratitude, your good life becomes a Godly life.

And friends it is easy to receive - all we need to say to our Lord Jesus Christ is "Substitute me!"

Amen.