

## **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 that because 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... she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it – and we know what happened.

Food is more than just food... in fact we often say “you are what you eat?” don’t we...

You see friends, that this is why 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 like this for 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 – Israel's identity was formed by this meal.

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 sufferinf 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 Jesus want to do more than just remind us of his death...

So he 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.

Thank God for the Passover Substitute - the Lamb which God provided – Jesus Christ.

So friends, I wonder if you might try your own substitution experiment – remember back to the Deadly Sins message on gluttony?

And we determined that the deadly sin of gluttony was our attempt to “experience true life” through how we feed and nurture our physical body?

Friends, would you be willing to substitute the Lord's Supper for those endeavors where you seek ultimate life or perhaps just try to cope with life?

Would you swap out dieting and body building for the ultimate figure and the good looks... for the Lord's Supper?

Would you swap out stress snacking, too much drinking, smoking to cope with life... for the Lord's Supper? (and maybe some Nicorette)

Will you give up the belief that you are your own provider, that you're a self-made man or woman in control of your own destiny... for the Lord's Supper

Because you are convinced that in the Lord's Supper the Holy Spirit connects us to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – in whom dwells all life, eternal life...

Friends, try it...



try substituting the faith by which you eat the Lord's Supper  
for attempt you are making to get "life"

Instead make it a priority to experience the Lord's Supper!

Taste and see that the Lord is Good, let the Lord's Supper  
nourish your faith in Jesus Christ and assure you that Christ  
gives you the life which you are seeking.

He offers himself **to** you, He offers himself **for** you –

So friends all we need to say is "Substitute me!"

Amen.