



Volume 6 Issue 9

West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



September 2019

Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

Why Did Jesus Institute the Lord’s Supper on the Passover?

As the book of Exodus begins, Israel has been in Egypt for more than four hundred years (cf. Exodus 12:40). They are now in bondage under an oppressive Pharaoh. The early chapters of Exodus describe the calling of Moses to be the one who will lead God’s people out of slavery in Egypt. He comes before Pharaoh demanding that Israel be allowed to go and worship the Lord, but Pharaoh refuses. God then sends a series of increasingly severe plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh’s stubbornness in the face of the first nine plagues results in God’s pronouncement of a final plague that will result in Israel’s redemption from slavery. God warns that He will go into the midst of Egypt and that every firstborn in the land will die. It is in the context of the warning of this final plague that we find God’s instructions regarding the Passover in Exodus 12.

God begins with a statement indicating that the Passover and Exodus will mark a new beginning for the nation of Israel. The month of Abib (late March and early April) is to be the first month of the year for God’s people. This emphasizes the fact that the exodus from Egypt is a key event, a turning point, in redemptive history. So central is the event that from this point forward, God is frequently described in reference to the exodus (e.g., Exodus 20:2; Leviticus 11:45; Numbers 15:41; Deuteronomy 5:6; Joshua 24:17; Judges 6:8; 1 Samuel 10:18; 2 Kings 17:36; Psalm 81:10; Jeremiah 11:4; Daniel 9:15; Hosea 11:1; Amos 2:10). He is identified as the One who redeemed His people from slavery.

In later years, the observation of the Passover would involve the priesthood (cf. Deuteronomy 16:5–7), but on the night of the original Passover, the responsibility for this ceremony falls to the head of each household. The head of every household is commanded to take a male lamb that is one year old and without any blemishes. This substitutionary lamb must be a symbol of perfection. As such, it foreshadows the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was uniquely without blemish (cf. 1 Peter 1:19). At twilight, the lamb for each household is to be killed.

The Lord then reveals what the Israelites are to do with the slain lambs and why they are to do it. Each head of a household is to take the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts and lintel of his house. God explains that the blood will be a sign. When He sees the blood on the door, He will pass over that house, and the firstborn in it will be spared from the coming judgment that is to fall on Egypt. After the lambs are killed by the head of the household, they are to be roasted and eaten with the people dressed and prepared to leave on a moment’s notice. Since the Passover is a “sacrifice” (cf. Exodus 12:27; 34:25; Deuteronomy 16:2), the eating of the lamb is a sacrificial meal like that associated with the peace offering described in Leviticus 3 and 7. In such meals, the body of the sacrificial victim is offered to believers to eat after the sacrifice is made (Leviticus 7:15).

In Exodus 12:14–20, God reveals the way future generations of Israelites are to observe the Passover. The exodus from Egypt is to be commemorated in the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which will be commenced with the Passover observance. The people are always to remember their slavery in Egypt and God’s act of redemption in freeing them from this bondage. The Passover, therefore, is to be observed throughout their generations.



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



Why Did Jesus Institute the Lord's Supper on the Passover? - Cont'd

Exodus 12:21–28 contains Moses' instructions to the people regarding the Passover and the people's response. Moses instructs the people to mark the doors using hyssop, a plant that will later be used in connection with various purification rituals (cf. Leviticus 14:49–52; Numbers 19:18–19). Although some scholars have denied that the Passover is a sacrifice, Moses specifically refers to it as such in Exodus 12:27. Although no specific sin is mentioned, the blood of the lamb turns away the wrath of God. Here again the Passover foreshadows the redemptive work of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7). The tenth and final plague comes on Egypt just as God warned through Moses and Aaron, and the firstborn throughout the land are struck dead. Only those covered by the blood of the lamb are spared. As a result of this final plague, Pharaoh finally relents and commands Moses and the Israelites to go. The beginning of the exodus itself is described in Exodus 12:33–42. The reason for God's instructions to be prepared to leave in haste now becomes clear. The Egyptians want the Israelites out immediately and urge them to depart. The Israelites plunder the Egyptians of their silver and gold, and after 430 years, they begin the journey out of Egypt and toward the promised land.

Our brief survey of Exodus 12 reveals several important facts about the Passover. The blood of the Passover lamb distinguished the people of God from the unbelieving Egyptians, and observation of the Passover was a sign of faith in God. The Passover also marked Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt. It commemorated her birth as a nation. Throughout all of Israel's generations, the Passover was to be a memorial of God's great redemptive act. It was also to be a teaching opportunity for Israelite parents, who were to explain its significance to their children.

In the later prophetic books of the Old Testament, the exodus would be viewed as the paradigmatic act of redemption. When the prophets looked toward God's future work of redemption, they compared it to the original exodus and spoke of it in terms of a new and greater exodus. We see such language, for example, in Isaiah 52:11–12, where God commanded Israel to depart from Babylon using language reminiscent of that used in connection with the original exodus from Egypt. At the close of the Old Testament, the Israelites were looking forward to a new and greater exodus.

When the Gospels open, it is no coincidence that numerous parallels are seen between Jesus and Moses and between Jesus and Israel. Jesus was even taken down into Egypt only to return after the death of Herod. This is said to have occurred "to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son'" (Matthew 2:15). Herod's decree to kill all the male children in Bethlehem is a gruesome echo of Pharaoh's decree to kill all the male children of the Israelites (Matthew 2:16; cf. Exodus 1:15–22). Commentators discuss even more parallels, but the point of the parallels is to communicate to the reader that the long-awaited time of redemption was at hand. The prophesied new exodus was near.

Why, then, did Jesus institute the Lord's Supper on the Passover the night before His crucifixion? In the *first* place, it is because He is the fulfillment of all that was foreshadowed by the Passover lamb. His blood, the blood of the new covenant, averts the wrath of God for those who place their faith in Him. *Second*, it is because the Last Supper was the eve of the prophesied greater new covenant act of redemption—the promised act of redemption that the prophets described in terms of a new exodus—and just as the first exodus was preceded by the institution of the Passover, the greater new exodus was preceded by the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on this night to signify that this new exodus was about to begin. This act indicated that the time of redemption had come. ~ *Dr. Keith Mathison - Reformation Bible College*



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



Loving the Church, For Better or Worse

Something is terribly wrong when professing Christians do not identify with the church and love being a part of her. Something is wrong when professing Christians fail to be passionate about every aspect of the church and long to invest themselves in her, taking all that the church represents and does to heart. Listen, for example, to the way Paul instructs the Ephesians: *"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish"* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

I fell in love with the church the moment I was converted as a freshman in college in 1971. Having never attended any church until then, I discovered a community that was, to me, like a family: caring, loving, and nourishing. The church I found was able to tell me that I was wrong about some things without driving me away. I knew that I was loved. The church showed me acts of kindness and fellowship that I recall with affection to this day. I was introduced to expository preaching from the start - a style of preaching that puts the Bible above the personality and idiosyncrasies of the preacher. I discovered communal prayer times, and joyful singing, all of which have been the mainstay of my Christian life ever since. True, I have had my share of worship wars, when Christians disagree over important things and sometimes trivial things; but for all that, I have taken delight in her rituals of song and sacrament, prayer and proclamation, more times than I can relate. I love the church. I fully endorse Calvin's way of putting it (and the shadow of Cyprian that lies behind it): *"For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels"* (Institutes 4.1.4). In the church, I have discovered saints and angels (though not, as far as I know, real angels). I have witnessed deeds of extraordinary kindness done to myself and to others, and I have been the beneficiary of kindnesses done to me by those who remained anonymous.

Yes, there is a dark side to the church as there is to all things in this fallen world. The church is not perfect. It has her share of malcontents and killjoys, her energy-sapping attention-getters and despondent hearts. Adam's cave has nothing on some churches I have seen, but none of this robs me of my love for the church. Even at her most eccentric - the King James Version's rendition of 1 Peter 2:9 as *"ye are ... a peculiar people"* is painfully accurate, if quaint -- she is still Christ's body. *"Love me, love my church"* is what Jesus seems to say in the Bible. I would not have it any other way. Would you? ~ **Dr. Derek Thomas**

Conforming to the Image of Christ

The obvious fact that we all sin can create an atmosphere of false security among us, leading us to accept with ease the idea that sin is so commonplace that we ought not to be too bothered by it lest we surrender our mental health to a self-deprecating neurosis. Yet in our desire to console ourselves and maintain a good self-image, we may push to the back burner the mandate of God, *"Be you holy, even as I am holy."*

Evangelical Christians are most vulnerable to succumbing to this distortion. We stress the fact that our justification is by faith alone and insist that our righteousness is found in Christ alone. Though these assertions are true, it is equally true that the faith by which we are justified is a faith that brings forth fruit in our lives. The slogan of the Reformation was that we are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.

The instant true faith is present in the heart of the believer, the process of sanctification begins. Change begins at once. The Christian begins to be conformed to the image of Christ. We are becoming holy. If we are not becoming holy, then Christ is not in us and our profession of faith is empty. ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



Wisely Handling the Book of Proverbs

Every culture seems to have its own unique, collected wisdom, pithy insights of the wise. Oftentimes, these tidbits of wisdom are preserved in the form of the proverb. We have proverbial sayings in American culture. I am thinking of sayings such as “*A stitch in time saves nine*” or “*A penny saved is a penny earned.*”

The Bible, of course, has an entire book of such pithy sayings—the book of Proverbs. However, this compilation of proverbial wisdom is different from all other such collections in that these sayings reflect not just human wisdom but divine wisdom, for these proverbs are inspired by God.

Still, we must be very careful in how we approach and implement these wise sayings. Simply because they are inspired does not mean that the biblical proverbs are like laws, imposing a universal obligation. Yet, some people treat them as if they were divine commandments. If we regard them in that way, we run into all kinds of trouble. Even divinely inspired proverbs do not necessarily apply to all life situations. Rather, they reflect insights that are generally true.

To illustrate this point, let me remind you of two of our own culture’s proverbs. First, we often say, “*Look before you leap.*” That is a valuable insight. But we have another proverb that seems to contradict it: “*He who hesitates is lost.*” If we tried to apply both of these proverbs at the same time and in the same way in every situation, we would be thoroughly confused. In many situations, wisdom dictates that we examine carefully where we should place our steps next so that we are not moving blindly. At the same time, we cannot be so paralyzed in our evaluation of the pros and cons of our next move that we hesitate too long before making a decision and lose opportunities when they present themselves to us.

Naturally, it does not really bother us to find seemingly contradictory proverbs in our own cultural wisdom. But when we discover them in the Bible, we find ourselves wrestling with questions about the trustworthiness of Scripture. Let me cite one well-known example. The book of Proverbs says, “*Answer not a fool according to his folly*” (26:4a). Then, in the very next verse, we read, “*Answer a fool according to his folly*” (26:5a). How can we follow these opposite instructions? How can both be statements of wisdom?

Again, just as in the example I gave above, the answer depends on the situation. There are certain circumstances when it is not wise to answer a fool according to his folly, but there are other circumstances when it is wise to answer a fool according to his folly. Proverbs 26:4 says, “*Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself*” (emphasis added). If someone is speaking foolishness, it is generally not wise to try to talk to him. Such a discussion will go nowhere, and the one who tries to carry on the discussion with the fool is in danger of falling into the same foolishness. In other words, there are circumstances when we are better off saying nothing.

At other times, however, it can be helpful to answer a fool according to his folly. Proverbs 26:5 says, “*Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes*” (emphasis added). Although it was made an art form by the ancient Greek philosophers, the Hebrews understood and in biblical teaching sometimes used one of the most effective ways of arguing with another person. I am referring to the *reductio ad absurdum*, which reduces the other person’s argument to absurdity. By means of this technique, it is possible to show a person the necessary, logical conclusion that flows out of his argument, and so demonstrate that his premises lead ultimately to an absurd conclusion.



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



Wisely Handling the Book of Proverbs - Cont'd

So, when a person has a foolish premise and gives a foolish argument, it can at times be very effective to answer the fool according to his folly. You step over onto his territory and say, *“Okay, I’ll take your position for argument’s sake, and I’m going to take it to its logical conclusion and show you the foolishness of it.”*

So, the book of Proverbs is concerned to give us practical guidelines for daily experience. It is a neglected treasure of the Old Testament, with untold riches lying in wait in its pages to guide our lives. It holds real, concrete advice that comes from the mind of God Himself. If we want wisdom, this is the fountain from which to drink. He who is foolish will neglect this fountain. He who is hungry for God’s wisdom will drink deeply from it. We need to listen to the wisdom of God so that we can cut through the many distractions and confusions of modern life. But, as with the entirety of the Word of God, we need to be zealous to learn how to handle the book of Proverbs properly. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

A Lesson from Nature

If God provides for the birds, how much more will He provide for you.

I can imagine our Lord standing on a hillside in Galilee, looking down over the beautiful north end of the sea, the breeze rippling across the water, the sun bright in the sky. The people were all gathered at His feet. As He was speaking to them, some birds might have flown across the sky.

Our Lord gives life to every bird of the sky and also sustains each one. He doesn’t say to the birds, *“I have given you life; now you figure out how to keep it.”* And birds don’t get together and say, *“We have to come up with a strategy to keep ourselves alive.”* Birds have no self-consciousness, no cognitive processes, no ability to reason. But God has given them an instinct so that they have a divine capacity to find what is necessary to live. God doesn’t just create life—He also sustains it.

In Matthew 6:26 Jesus asked the people, *“Are you not worth much more than [the birds]?”* He was arguing from the lesser to the greater. No bird was ever created in the image of God or designed to be a joint-heir with Christ throughout eternity. Jesus was saying, *“If God sustains the life of a bird (the lesser), don’t you think He will take care of you (the greater)?”* God’s provision, of course, is no excuse for man’s laziness. A bird has to work for its food, and you have to work for yours. That’s because God has designed that man should eat bread by the sweat of his face (cf. Genesis 3:19). If you don’t work, you don’t eat (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Just as God provides for the bird through its instinct, so God will provide for you through your effort.

When you see the birds of the air, remind yourself of the Lord’s teaching, and thank Him for His faithfulness to you.~ *Dr. John MacArthur*



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



How Important Is Genesis 1-3?

I'm convinced the opening chapters of Genesis are not optional. They establish the vital foundation for everything we believe as Christians.

Sadly, it is a foundation that is being systematically undermined by the very institutions that should be most vigorously defending it. More and more Christian educational institutions, apologists, and theologians are abandoning faith in the literal truth of Genesis 1-3.

I recall reading a survey a few years ago which revealed that in one of America's leading evangelical accrediting associations, whose membership boasted scores of evangelical Bible colleges and universities, only five or six college-level schools remain solidly opposed to the old-earth view of creation. The rest are open to a reinterpretation of Genesis 1-3 that accommodates evolutionary theories.

Scores of well-known Bible teachers and apologists see the whole question as moot, and some even aggressively argue that a literal approach to Genesis is detrimental to the credibility of Christianity. They have given up the battle—or worse, joined the attack against biblical creationism.

I'm thankful for those who are still faithfully resisting the trend—organizations like **Answers in Genesis**, the **Creation Research Society**, and the **Institute for Creation Research**. These organizations and others like them involve many expert scientists who challenge the presuppositions of evolutionists on technical and scientific grounds. They clearly demonstrate that scientific proficiency is not incompatible with faith in the literal truth of Scripture—and that the battle for the beginning is ultimately a battle between two mutually exclusive faiths—faith in Scripture versus faith in anti-theistic hypotheses. It is not really a battle between science and the Bible.

As Christians, we believe the Bible is truth revealed to us by God, who is the true Creator of the universe. That belief is the basic foundation of all genuine Christianity. It is utterly incompatible with the speculative presuppositions of the naturalists.

In Scripture the Creator Himself has revealed to us everything essential for life and godliness. And it starts with an account of creation. If the biblical creation account is in any degree unreliable, the rest of Scripture stands on a shaky foundation.

But the foundation is not shaky. The more I understand what God has revealed to us about our origin, the more I see clearly that the foundation stands firm. I agree with those who say it is time for the people of God to take a fresh look at the biblical account of creation. But I disagree with those who think that calls for any degree of capitulation to the transient theories of naturalism. Only an honest look at Scripture, with sound principles of hermeneutics, will yield the right understanding of the creation and fall of our race.

The Bible gives a clear and cogent account of the beginnings of the cosmos and humanity. There is absolutely no reason for an intelligent mind to balk at accepting it as a literal account of the origin of our universe. Although the biblical account clashes at many points with naturalistic and evolutionary hypotheses, it is not in conflict with a single scientific fact. Indeed, all the geological, astronomical, and scientific data can be easily reconciled with the biblical account. The conflict is not between science and Scripture, but between the biblicalist's confident faith and the naturalist's willful skepticism.



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



How Important Is Genesis 1-3? - Cont'd

To many, having been indoctrinated in schools where the line between hypothesis and fact is systematically and deliberately being blurred, that may sound naive or unsophisticated, but it is nonetheless a fact. Again, science has never disproved one word of Scripture, and it never will. On the other hand, evolutionary theory has always been in conflict with Scripture and always will be. But the notion that the universe evolved through a series of natural processes remains an unproven and untestable hypothesis, and therefore it is not "science." There is no proof whatsoever that the universe evolved naturally. Evolution is a mere theory—and a questionable, constantly-changing one at that. Ultimately, if accepted at all, it must be taken by sheer faith.

How much better to base our faith on the sure foundation of God's Word! There is no ground of knowledge equal to or superior to Scripture. Unlike scientific theory, it is eternally unchanging. Unlike the opinions of man, its truth is revealed by the Creator Himself! It is not, as many suppose, at odds with science. True science has always affirmed the teaching of Scripture. Archaeology, for instance, has demonstrated the truthfulness of the biblical record time and time again. Wherever Scripture's record of history may be examined and either proved or disproved by archaeological evidence or reliable independent documentary evidence, the biblical record has always been verified. There is no valid reason whatsoever to doubt or distrust the biblical record of creation, and there is certainly no need to adjust the biblical account to try to make it fit the latest fads in evolutionary theory.

Again, a biblical understanding of the creation and fall of humanity establishes the necessary foundation for the Christian world-view. Everything Scripture teaches about sin and redemption assumes the literal truth of the first three chapters of Genesis. If we wobble to any degree on the truth of this passage, we undermine the very foundations of our faith.

If Genesis 1-3 doesn't tell us the truth, why should we believe anything else in the Bible? Without a right understanding of our origin, we have no way to understand anything about our spiritual existence. We cannot know our purpose, and we cannot be certain of our destiny. After all, if God is not the Creator, then maybe He's not the Redeemer either. If we cannot believe the opening chapters of Scripture, how can we be certain of anything the Bible says?

To those who will inevitably complain that such a view is credulous and unsophisticated, my reply is that it is certainly superior to the irrational notion that an ordered and incomprehensibly complex universe sprung by accident from nothingness and emerged by chance into the marvel that it is.

Scripture offers the only accurate explanations that can be found anywhere about how our race began, where our moral sense originated, why we cannot seem to do what our own consciences tells us is right, and how we can be redeemed from this hopeless situation.

Scripture is not merely the best of several possible explanations. It is the Word of God. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**



West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church

*“Thoughtfully Reformed -
Redemptively Relevant”*



Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner - September 2019

Birthdays

*Ben P. (3)
Zachary A. (9)
Rhydian H. (12)
Jonathan D. (15)
Ruth T. (23)
Lydia W. (30)*

Anniversary

Jeremy and Jesse W. (27)

Beating the Clock

I have learned a few tricks to help me beat the clock. They may be helpful to you.

I realize that all my time is God’s time and all my time is my time by His delegation. God owns me and my time. Yet, He has given me a measure of time over which I am a steward. I can commit that time to work for other people, visit other people, etc., but it is time for which I must give an account.

Time can be redeemed by concentration and focus. One of the greatest wastes of time occurs in the human mind. Our hands may be busy but our minds idle. Likewise, our hands may be idle while our minds are busy. Woolgathering, day-dreaming, and indulging in frivolous fantasy are ways in which thoughts may be wasted in real time. To focus our minds on the task at hand—with fierce concentration—makes for productive use of time.

The mind can redeem valuable time taken up by ordinary or mechanical functions. For example, the mechanics of taking a shower are not difficult. In this setting, the mind is free for problem solving, creative thinking, or the composition of themes. Many of my messages and lectures are germinated in the shower. When I used to play a lot of golf, I found that the time I had between shots was a great time for composing messages in my mind. ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**



West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

Office: 1001 Kenyon Court, Suffolk, VA 23435

E-Mail: pastorscofield@gmail.com

Website: www.westsuffolkbcb.com Phone/Fax: 757-539-0363

Teaching Pastor/Elder: Pastor Ben Scofield

Teaching Elders: Scott Thomas and Mike Prince

Deacons: Marlin Halsey, John McPhatter and John Hurst

Editor: Walt Lawrence, gwlcf10415@gmail.com

Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.