

The Feasts of Jehovah

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Those of you who come regularly to Mount Pleasant Hall use the best hymn book I've ever come across and that's the book we're going to use tonight. There are so many hymns appropriate to what I feel I should say this week that it was difficult to select a few to use.

Many of them convey the very words that I feel I should use in explaining some of the things we are going to consider. And our first hymn certainly ranks among that list, hymn number 46. Lord, we treasure with affection all thy path of sorrow here, and those closing scenes of [00:01:07] anguish to our hearts thyself endear.

Deep thy sorrow then, Lord Jesus, deeper far than thought can reach, grief intense and sufferings holy, far beyond all tongues to teach. None could follow there, blessed Savior, when thou didst for sins atone, for those sufferings deep unfathomed were, Lord Jesus, thine alone.

Thou didst measure then sin's distance, darkness, wrath, and curse were thine, man betrayed by God forsaken, thus we learn thy love divine. Number 46.

[00:02:02] Would you turn please to the first epistle of Peter in chapter 1. 1 Peter 1, verses 10 and 11.

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

And then in the Old Testament, Leviticus chapter 23.

[00:03:16] Leviticus 23 verse 1, And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest and holy convocation. Ye shall do no work therein, it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. And lastly, Psalm 22, Psalm 22 and verse 1.

[00:04:11] My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my roaring?

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not.

And in the night season, and I'm not silent, but thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee and were delivered. [00:05:03] They trusted in thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people. All they that see me, let me to scorn. They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. But thou art he that took me out of the womb. Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb. Thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bulls have come past me, strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. [00:06:01] They gaped upon me with their mouths as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws. And thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have come past me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O Lord, for my strength hast thee to help me. [00:07:02] Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling, from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth.

The major burden of the week is to get a better understanding of what we are intended to learn from the feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23.

And the first thing that strikes the mind as we read Leviticus 23 is that before the detail of the feasts is entered into, we get a reference to the Sabbath of rest, to which the scriptures look on, to which God himself is working towards.

[00:08:10] God has made it plain that he has worked, as the Lord Jesus said, the Father worketh hitherto, and I work, the Lord said, of his own activities, with the view that there shall be a day and a time when God shall be at rest from the work that he has done, and he shall consider the works of his hands, and he will be satisfied. He will be content.

That end to which he is working will have been arrived at. And if we are to get the gain of the feasts unto the Lord, we will do well if we consider [00:09:01] just a little of the end to which God is working and the means that he uses to achieve that end. We have read that verse from 1 Peter 1, that global statement that tells us that salvation in the fullest sense of the term involves the consideration and all that's involved in the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow.

And before we go into the details of the seven feasts, I thought it would do well if we read Psalm 22, which will condition our minds and will let us see whether or not the conclusions [00:10:05] that we arrive at by the exercise of a little spiritual judgment are valid according to Scripture. So my initial proposition is that in Psalm 22 we have a declaration of the end to which God is working and the means and the basis upon which all that will rest. And so we turn to Psalm 22.

I have read the first twenty and a half verses, which plainly, from the text as read, give us the detail, the harrowing detail, of the sufferings of Christ at Calvary.

And let us be clear straight away, everything that God is aiming to do, all the blessing [00:11:07] that

God is aiming to bring in, all the justice that God will eventually apply is on the basis of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The hymn writer summed up the situation for most of us when we trusted the Saviour, trembling we had hoped for mercy, some lone place within the door. Happy would we have been if that was all there was to it. But as the Lord has led us on, whether for two months or eighty years, increasingly day by day we learn from the Scriptures in the power of the Spirit, there was far more to [00:12:01] God's master plan, the purpose of God, than my blessing.

The glory of his name, the glory of Christ, bringing into blessing, in many spheres of different companies, as we shall hope to see, all resting upon the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, tonight and other nights, we will be hoping to cover the scope of the Scriptures as read, with the intention that we can go away in the privacy of the Lord's presence and fill in the framework, fill in the detail, on the basis of the framework suggested.

As we do that, we may well come to the conclusion that when we think about the sufferings of [00:13:04] Christ, they fall into two main streams.

Sufferings at the hand of men, sufferings at the hand of God. We do well to distinguish between them. When we read the Scriptures, we will assuredly find that the outcome of the Lord Jesus' suffering at the hands of men will ultimately lead to God acting in justice to the condemnation of man.

But when we consider the sufferings of Christ at the hand of God, we shall find that the result is a display of the riches of the mercy of God, which shall end in the blessing of [00:14:07] man. We shall further see that suffering at the hands of man, the Lord Jesus endured for righteousness.

When he suffered at the hands of God, he suffered on account of sin. We do well in looking at the feasts unto the Lord, in seeing the wonderful sphere and scope of the blessing, to bear in mind that there could be no blessing unless Jesus had first suffered for sin at the hand of God. Now that is the presentation of truth in Psalm 22.

We shall look at the scope of this, and then we shall pass on to the second half of the [00:15:01] psalm.

Psalm 22, then, and if you are wanting to equate this with the book of Leviticus, you may well want to consider that this is the psalm of the sin offering. This describes what it felt like for the Lord Jesus to suffer on account of sin at the hands of God.

Deep suffering, indeed.

And verses one to six, as we have them in our text, go into this very matter. What it felt like to the Lord Jesus to be alone, as we sing, alone, he bear the cross, alone, its grief sustained.

But as we read the first six verses, we cannot escape this conclusion, that the one who is [00:16:12] depicted here, the Lord Jesus himself, suffering at the hands of God on account of sin, is alone, uniquely alone, but submissive to his God, because this was the purpose for which he had come into the world, for which he had come into manhood. And after the cry of abandonment, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Here we are introduced into the holy cloister of the presence of the blessed God.

[00:17:05] When the perfect man in the days of his flesh, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, for the first time that we have on record, as the perfect, submissive, dependent man, he says, my God, my God, tremendous appellation.

And then, why hast thou forsaken me, goes into the details of the extent of the suffering, which will bear further meditation, but in verse three he gives the answer. The reason is, thou art holy, thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

One of the most significant features of the suffering of the Lord Jesus is that he knew [00:18:02] full well what it would involve for him.

It is a mercy of God that we don't know what lies ahead for us. The Lord Jesus knew full well what lay ahead for him, which is why in the garden of Gethsemane, in anticipation of the starkness of the suffering, he said, as we know, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, notwithstanding, not my will, but thine be done. Consider, when you can, the first six verses, and you will see the utter submissiveness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tomorrow, if the Lord will, we shall look at the Passover.

Why is it that a lamb is taken so often in the scriptures to depict the attitude of the Lord Jesus [00:19:08] in allowing himself to be taken and crucified and slain? It is the submissiveness of the lamb that is most significant, and here in these first six verses, we have an account of that submissiveness. Now, briefly, verses 7 to 11, take account of the way that those who were round about him mocked him, scorned him, jeered at him, but how, nevertheless, he was completely unmoved, unswerving in his utter devotion to complete the task that had been given to him. [00:20:02] Verse 7 down to 11, then, he's mocked for his devotion, but verses 9 and to 11 tell us that, notwithstanding all the mocking and the jeering, his confidence in his God was undisturbed. Now, verse 21, we get the detail of what it felt like for the Lord Jesus to be utterly surrounded by every kind of enemy. Notice, in this psalm, which tells us of the feelings of Christ, the sufferings of Christ at the hand of God, it nevertheless takes account of his response in his spirit to all the enemies round about, man and demon.

[00:21:06] If we look at verse 12, Bulls have compassed me.

Verse 13, as a ravening and roaring lion. Verse 16, dogs have compassed me. The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. Verse 20, my save, deliver my darling from the power of the dog. 21, save me from the lion's mouth.

The thing I see in verse 12 is this.

Bulls, ferocious, powerful, surrounding him, encircling him.

I remember visiting a Christian farmer who breeds bulls, and he took me along with him into the pens where these young bulls were, [00:22:11] and one of the staff had said, I think you'd better come and look at something here, something he wasn't sure about. And the foreman and the farmer went over the fence into where the bull was.

And I had had it explained to me, but I observed and I noticed that they walked towards the bull and

they engaged the bull by the eye. They looked into the eyes of the bull and they faced the bull all the time. They walked towards it, they got close to it to inspect it, and then when they saw what they needed to see and they came out of the pen, [00:23:03] they retreated slowly, no sudden movements, again looking at the bull in the eye, and then climbed backwards over the fence. When they came out, they said, you will notice you never turn your back on a bull. It will immediately pounce on you and gore you. You can't do that if you're surrounded by bulls. It certainly seems to me that the bulls of Bergen encircling the Lord Jesus emphasizes that for him there was no escape, there was no way out. The suffering must needs be endured. But while the enemies round about thought that they were applying the pressure, thought that they were applying their judicial system, the mockery though it was, the real suffering, the real pressure, the real judgment, the real condemnation came from the mighty God. [00:24:14] My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Every possible kind of enemy.

There were the dogs of the Gentiles, there was the assembly of the wicked rulers of the Jews, there was the lion Satan himself trying to bring to an end the one who had come into the world for the glory of God and the blessing of man.

We read that man in general is all his lifetime subject to bondage because of the fear of death.

[00:25:13] But that the Lord Jesus came into the world to annul the power of him who uses death to induce fear in man.

The Lord Jesus with all enemies surrounding doesn't plead for deliverance from all these bulls and dogs and the assembly of the wicked or the lion in that particular sense. He was confronted by a greater one and he calls for deliverance from the very jaws of death. [00:26:04] Now, in case there is any doubt as to what is intended from verses 13 down to 17, there is the most graphic description of death by crucifixion that there could ever be. Written a thousand years before it was the common mode of death for the lowest social order of criminal, for the most vile of crimes in the Roman Empire.

The Spirit of God directed David in considering some of the enemies in his day when he was in difficulty to speak of things well beyond the compass of his own experience. [00:27:03] Things that could only be true of the Lord Jesus Christ. But notice that while verses 13 to 17 tell us as to circumstances of what men did to him, the significant word is in verse 15, Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. Man, in his wickedness of heart, took Jesus and nailed him to the tree. But God took that occasion to work a mightier work.

The Lord Jesus had come into the world for the purpose that the claims of the holy God as to sin might be fully met. That he must needs plumb the depths before there could be any blessing at all. [00:28:07] And the climax of that blessing, the climax of that suffering, is given in the last clause that I read. Save me from the lion's mouth.

If there'd been time, which there isn't, I would have suggested that we sign at this stage hymn number 41. Perhaps if you look at it, pick your hymn books up, see the change in the mood. Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Saviour. Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord. That fits very well with the verses we've read.

[00:29:04] But we are going to look now at the rest of the psalm, which takes its character from the change of mood. Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph for his foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain, and he lives forever with his saints to reign. He arose, he arose, hallelujah, Christ arose. The doctrine of the verse and chorus aren't entirely parallel with what we are considering, but the change of mood between verse and chorus is a very happy one. So in verse 15, men did it to him, but he accepted it in its greater significance at the hands of God. Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. [00:30:04] Verse 21, save me from the lion's mouth. There shouldn't really be the conjunction for there, it really reads, save me from the lion's mouth, thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn. Death gave place to resurrection. God raised him from the dead and gave him glory. There are lovely verses which tell us that there was an answer now.

And we can ask ourselves, why is it that in the earlier part of the psalm there was no answer? Why has thou forsaken me? The fathers previously, the patriarchs, had cried to God and been delivered. Why was the most devoted, godly man that ever lived on earth not delivered at the time of his deepest, darkest distress? It was because there was a work to be done, a transaction to be completed. [00:31:18] Why then the answer, thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn? Because the work was done. The cry of the Lord Jesus in the gospels, it is finished. Again, in the original tongue, finished. It's done. As soon as the depths had been fully plumbed, as soon as the work was complete in answering to God on account of sin, God immediately raised him from the dead.

We know he died according to the scriptures. He was buried. He lay in the grave and in answer to type, illustration, prophecy in the Old Testament, the third day he rose again according to the scriptures.

[00:32:28] Consider those verses in the gospels, John in particular, John 12, John 13. He had glorified God in the work that he did and God straightway glorified him. God was in a hurry. He was anxious when the work was completed, he was anxious to give his answer to the work that Christ had done in enduring not only the contradiction of sinners against himself, but suffering for sin at the hand of God. [00:33:08] Now, let us turn again to the scriptures to verse 22. We shall be looking at some of the parallel effects as we go through the feasts, but we can take account of the scope of these verses. Verse 22, I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. The term congregation, assembly, church is used occasionally in Old Testament, even the New, to tell us about things connected with the nation of Israel. May it just be I wouldn't quibble if you conclude that there are some respects in which David, if he had anything in mind at all in echoing these words, was thinking of the blessing and the praise of God and praise for God arising for blessing within the nation. [00:34:23] But we know from the New Testament that as always the application goes further than the immediate circumstance of the psalm. We know from John 20 and from Hebrews 2 that the church of the living God, the church brought into being on the day of Pentecost, to which souls will be added until the moment of the rapture. That church is the body of Christ.

[00:35:05] That church which is designed and destined to be his bride, that building which is an habitation of God by the Spirit, the church of the living God, is at least alluded to here. The first and nearest and dearest circle of blessing arising from the sufferings of Christ, his death and resurrection, the first display of the glory that shall follow is in the sphere of the church. Encompassed in this little verse, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, and he did, to Mary, on the first day of the week in resurrection. John 20 verse 17. [00:36:02] Bear in mind there, when we think of the wonderful privilege

of being built into this wonderful structure, the assembly of the living God, the church, bear in mind what the Lord Jesus said to Mary, Go and tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Always rejoice that God is your Father, but never forget that your Father is God.

The one who is the Holy One of Israel is ever the same, and enjoyment of the privilege of drawing near into the holiest carries with it the realization of the holiness of the one with whom we have to do. [00:37:04] Certainly, the second part of the verse, in the midst of the assembly, I will sing praises unto thee, quoted from here in Hebrews chapter 2. Again, a tribute to the effectiveness of the result of the Lord Jesus in manhood, suffering unto death, and that the death of the cross in Hebrews chapter 2. Well, we'll leave that for the moment. Verses 23 to 26. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him, all ye the seed of Jacob. Verse 25, my praise shall be of thee in the great congregation, not the assembly, the church here. In these verses, 23 and 26, another concentric circle. Christ personally at the center, because he died and rose again, a circle on that center, the church nearest and dearest to him, concentric with that, a slightly wider sphere, the nation of Israel, ultimately to be brought into blessing again. [00:38:21] Because Jesus died and rose again, as we shall see in the feasts. Verse 27, down to the end. The blessing on earth that shall be the portion of the nation of Israel, when they are in the good of the death and resurrection of Christ, made good to them in the grace of God. The blessing shall be experienced universally throughout the length and breadth of every land. The knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

[00:39:18] Israel administering the blessing on earth on behalf of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Reaching out to the saved among the nations. This is one of the scriptures which affirms that the church is distinct from Israel, is distinct from nations ultimately brought into blessing. This one little verse expanded from verse 22 into the New Testament epistles, filling out that which concerns Christ and the church.

[00:40:05] Christ, the King of Israel, verses 23 to 26. Worldwide, not only as son of God, as to the church, son of David, as to Israel, son of man, as to the ends of the world. We shall see, if the Lord will, that everything will be in proper balance, supply and demand. Peace, plenty, prosperity throughout the earth because God's man is in control. All brought into blessing. Church, Israel, the Gentile nations. All intelligently in the realization that they owe their blessing, they owe their position to that which Christ has done. [00:41:02] What a happy end to the psalm. They shall come, yes, they'll come to Jerusalem. Every nation will send its ambassador, its representatives, to the nation of Israel, to the city of Jerusalem. Where they will be trained in order that when they go back to their home countries, they can administrate in accordance with that which is defined by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And all, having come, shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born. This condition will last for a thousand years, the world to come, the millennium. Throughout that millennial age, all the blessing shall be enjoyed in the realization that it's all owed to the one who must needs cry, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

[00:42:20] Again, as on the cross, the Lord Jesus said, it is finished. So here, tribute is given to the worthiness of the one who has done the work in order that blessing might result. As we look into the feasts unto Jehovah, we shall see that we must need commence with a sober meditation on the death of Christ and the consequent upon his personal resurrection. There are those who are brought into wonderful blessing and so feel it in their hearts that they offer to him and through him to the blessed God that adequate response for all that the mighty God has done. [00:43:18] That there shall eventually be that Sabbath of rest for the God, the spring and source of every blessing, our part to

enjoy in foretaste and intelligently by the Spirit the significance of that which God is going to do. We're going to sing one last hymn now, which will put some of these things together. Hymn number 39. It takes account of the present position of the Lord Jesus. On his Father's throne is seated Christ the Lord, the living one. All his toil on earth completed, all his work for sinners done. [00:44:08] In the glory see him, God's eternal son. Every knee shall bow before him. Son of man, in new creation, leader of a chosen race. Well may glory crown him in the ordered place. Number 39.

In the glory see him, God's eternal son. Every knee shall bow before him. Every tongue confess his name.

[00:45:23] Ransomed, myriads shall adore him, who endured the sin of shame. From the glory, from the glory, from death now neverthrown.