

STUDY III - TRIALS EXTREMES AND DEVICES

(See Items #155 & #165)

Br. Ted Smith

For quite some time, I think most of us have been aware that there has been a difference of opinion as to the proper time for the killing of the Passover Lamb. It has not been too clear, up to now why there is a difference and particularly as to just why there should be any strain between brethren over a difference of this kind. Just recently it has been made clear just what the difference is, and this paper will be an attempt to put the difference in simple language, so it can be seen clearly; and also so we can see how unnecessary that there be any strain over this difference.

Here is what we think the real difference is—some feel the normal time (by “normal time” we mean the annual occasions BEFORE our Lord partook of the final Passover) for the killing of the Passover Lamb, was three P.M. on the 14th of Nisan; while others feel that the normal time was after six P.M. on the 14th of Nisan, and not at three P.M. Those who hold to the three P.M. time for the killing of the Lamb believe “between evenings” meant between the time of the descent of the sun (beginning at noon) until it went entirely down at 6 P.M. and “between evenings” was half way between the going down of the sun, starting at noon, until 6 P.M. This was explained by a Jew who claimed that there were two evenings—the first one from noon until three P.M., and the second evening from 3 P.M. to 6 P.M., and “between evenings” would be 3 P.M. (See Reprint page 2953, article or letter entitled “Between Evenings”—A Jewish View.)

In Volume VI we read that our Lord partook of the Passover with his disciples after six o'clock on the 14th day, and this was explained to be possible by the scriptural wording that the Lamb could be slain between 6 P.M. of the 14th and 6 P.M. of the 15th; and the Pastor explained that the Jewish day began at 6 P.M. (Vol. VI, page 462, par. 1.)

If “normal time” for the killing of the Passover Lamb was 3 P.M., then it is argued that it was physically impossible for our Lord to partake of the Passover Lamb in a normal manner, for he was nailed on the cross at 9 A.M. and died at 3 P.M. And we know the Pastor did say at one time in his writings that our Lord partook of the Passover one day sooner than was normally the case. (See Reprint page 2771, col. 2, par. 2.)

We have been reminded of the fact that the antitype was supposed to occur at the exact time of the type and that the antitype started to be fulfilled when our Lord rode into Jerusalem on the ass, on the 10th day. As a further fulfillment of the type by the antitype, we find our Lord died on the 14th. And as he died at 3 P.M. this is taken by some as the key to just when (normally) the typical Lamb was to be killed. From this position of reasoning, it is pointed out that the typical Passover Lamb would have to be roasted and eaten on the 15th, some time after 6 P.M. Texts are cited as proof that this was in fact the

time the Jews did partake of the Passover Lamb. (See Reprint 2771, col. 2, par. 2, last 2 sentences.)

And now let us draw to a focus the actual difference of opinion and then let us reason dispassionately and see if there should be any strain over the difference. First—some brethren believe that the last Passover was slain and eaten after 6 P.M. on the 14th (as set forth in the Sixth Volume), and claim that this was the normal procedure. Second—other brethren believe that while this WAS done at the time of the LAST Passover, it was not the normal procedure, but was a necessary accommodation to the situation, because, as previously pointed out, if the Passover Lamb was to be slain at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and if this corresponded to the time our Lord died on the cross, our Lord could not possibly partake of the Passover Lamb at the normal time because HE WAS THE ANTITYPICAL PASSOVER LAMB AND TOOK THE PLACE OF THE TYPICAL LAMB. Hence our Pastor's statement that our Lord did partake of the last Passover one day earlier than was normally the case. (See Reprint page 2771, col. 2, par2.)

We all willingly follow the pattern set for us in Volume VI and we all joyfully partake of the Memorial after 6 P.M. on the day that we think fits the time the Passover was eaten by our Lord and the disciples, and when the Memorial was instituted by our Lord. And we all take to our hearts the exhortation of the Pastor in Volume VI on page 466, par. 1: “How grandly comprehensive is the meaning of this divinely instituted celebration! We are not putting the symbols instead of the reality; nothing surely could be further from our Lord's intention, nor further from propriety on our part. THE HEART-COMMUNION WITH HIM, THE FEEDING UPON HIM, THE HEART-COMMUNION WITH FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE BODY, AND THE HEART-REALIZATION OF THE MEANING OF OUR COVENANT OF SACRIFICE, IS THE REAL COMMUNION, WHICH, IF WE ARE FAITHFUL, WE WILL CARRY OUT DAY BY DAY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR—BEING DAILY BROKEN WITH OUR LORD, AND CONTINUALLY FEEDING UPON HIS MERIT, GROWING STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT, WHAT A BLESSING COMES TO US WITH THE CELEBRATION OF HIS MEMORIAL! WHAT A BURNING OF HEART FOR FURTHER APPRECIATION AND GROWTH IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE, AND FOR FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN THE PRIVILEGES OF THE SERVICE TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED, NOT ONLY AS RESPECTS THE PRESENT BUT ALSO AS RESPECTS THE FUTURE!”

In view of the holy exhortation of our Pastor above, and the precious heart-communion we have with the Lord and with one another, when we do partake of the Memorial each year, should it not be apparent that any difference over the wording of a definition of the time when the Lamb was slain is quite unimportant and should not be allowed to interfere with the blessings we are supposed to have at Memorial time? What vital difference is there in saying a particular hour was “normal” (3 P.M.) and another particular time was

an “accommodation” (after 6 P.M.)? Why should we feel grieved with one another over such a difference in definition? Should we not be balanced so we can discuss differences with one another in a friendly manner knowing that all of us are sincere and honest? Some time in the past we were told of an extreme position that some take, that fairly takes your breath away—it is claimed by some that if you think the “normal” time for the slaying of the typical Lamb was at 3 P.M. the afternoon of the 14th, you “are in fact denying the ransom!” I don’t think the Lord wants us to be extremists in the slightest degree; and no doubt he has permitted honest differences to give us practice in becoming balanced in the spirit of a sound mind and love.

As to our own personal view, we conform to the suggestions found in Volume VI. But we do think there is merit in the belief that 3 P.M. is the NORMAL time for the killing of the Passover Lamb. But we do not think there is anything vital either way the matter is viewed. And we go on record as opposing any tendency in making an issue of these differences of opinion. As our Pastor said, in connection with another subject—“let brotherly love continue.”

I hope that the foregoing remarks, even though imperfectly presented will prove to be a blessing to all who read.