

The Tender Side of Passover

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung – 3/2/2013

When I was a young man, on a cold early morning in 1964, I was driving through southern Mississippi – and I heard Herbert W. Armstrong for the very first time.

He was coming in loud and clear over radio station WOAI San Antonio, TX. It was about 5am – and I was listening to “The World Tomorrow” program.

As I drove to work, the dark moonless night sky was lit only by the stars.

I remember that Herbert W. Armstrong was quoting the Psalm of David where it says,

Psalm 8:

- 1** O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who has set thy glory higher the heavens. [God is more glorious than all the stars combined.]
- 3** When I consider thy heavens [Lord], the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
- 4** What is man, that thou art **mindful** of him? And the son of man, that thou visit him?

I pulled my pick-up truck off to the side of the road on top of a small rise and got out to look up at the sky.

The sky was cold, dark and extremely clear. With no moon – I could see stars all the way down to the horizon in every direction.

I just stood there and gazed upwards at the shimmering strobes of light from a billion majestic stars.

I don't believe that I have ever seen more stars in the sky. And the radio continued...

Psalm 8:

- 3** When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
- 4** **What is man**, that thou art **mindful of him**? And the son of man, that thou visit him?

For a long time after first hearing Psalm 8 I thought that David was asking a rhetorical question that could be answered thus:

Of course there is a creator God – and mankind is important enough that God would even take notice.

I thought the verse was asking the questions, “Does God know we exist? Does God take notice? Is God aware of mankind?”

When I first heard this verse – “**What is man**, that thou art **mindful of him**?” and for many years after that – I thought this verse was stating that God took notice of mankind.

It was like God was saying – Yes, I know you are over there – but I'm pretty busy you know. But, I'll keep **you in mind**.

After all, I figured, the universe was filled with an immense number of enormous heavenly bodies, galaxies and nebula that must occupy most of God's time and attention.

Brethren, what is on God's mind? Is He so busy with the vast universe that He hardly has the time to give this earth a cursory glance? Is God so preoccupied elsewhere that He scarcely knows that we exist?

Both Job and David pondered about the extent and degree of God's involvement with mankind.

Job 7:

17 What is man, that thou should magnify him [promote him to excellence]? And that thou should **set thine heart** upon him?"

Not only is God physically involved in the creation of man – Much more than that – He is spiritually and **emotionally** involved. He **set thine heart upon** us!

Now, that rendering told me that God is more interested and involved than I first thought.

What is man, that thou should magnify him [**promote him to excellence**]? And that thou should **set thine heart upon him**?"

Psalm 8:

4 What is man, that **thou art mindful of him**? And the son of man, that thou visit him?"

The English Standard Version translation of the Bible has: What is man, that **you make so much of him**, and that you set **your heart on him**?

The New American Standard Bible has: What is man that You **magnify him**, And that You are **concerned about him**?

For many years I had been missing a critical component in understanding this verse.

*O LORD our Lord ('*Yahweh Adoni*')...thou art **mindful** [*'zakar*].

'*Zakar*' means to earnestly remember by constant awareness in the conscious mind – pushing aside all other thoughts as secondary.

God's mind is so full of the thoughts of mankind – there is no room for any other endeavor!

The meaning of that verse is just the exact opposite of the way I had originally thought.

Instead of God being somewhat aware of us – it means that God is **mind-full** of mankind.

We are God's passion, hope, Plan, motivation, aspiration, and vision. God's mind is **filled** with man and his future.

With **men** we speak of *raison d'être*. That is a French phrase meaning "reason for existence."

A man who has a life's goal of accomplishing a project is said to eat, sleep, and walk, every waking moment of his existence to carry out his ambition.

That is the way God is with His Plan to bring many **sons and daughters to glory**. We are God's *raison d'être*!

We, the Children of God, are the venture, the Plan that God dreams of, envisions and is achieving.

God has **set His heart** on our being in His eternal Family. God desires we share His life with Him. His mind is **full of us**!

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy **fingers**...

Notice the hands-on **delicate and intimate** nature of God's involvement – we are the very finest of God's own personalized handiwork in all creation. ...the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art **mindful** of him? and the son of man, that thou visit him?"

You and I have been thinking of God for 20 years – perhaps 70 years. God has thought of nothing **but us** and His Plan for us – throughout all eternity.

God was thinking of you and me before time began – in fact He created time just so we could grow to be like Him – be like He is.

He is reproducing Himself in us.

1 John 3:

2 Beloved, now are we the Children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, **we shall be like Him**; for we shall see Him as He is.

Psalm 8:

5 For thou hast made him a little [while] lower than the angels, and [notice our destiny] hast crowned him with glory and honour. [**Glory and honor** are reserved for God's very own Family.]

6 Thou made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.

The works of thy hands **includes the entire universe!**

Notice the similarity:

Genesis 1:

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Psalm 8:

7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

There are about 100 Billion stars in our Milky Way Galaxy alone.

How many galaxies are there? There are as many as 200 Billion galaxies in the observable universe.

How many stars are there – do the math if you dare? There is not one created **that was not created for you.**

Psalm 19:

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handy work.

If it were not for God's Plan for mankind to be in His family – there would not be a single star – only dark nothingness!

The entire immeasurable universe was created by God with man **in mind** – God is mindful of us.

Even when God was creating the vast powerful universe – it is not for the universe – it is for man.

The **Word** that we know as Jesus Christ was speaking to the man we know as Abraham about 4000 years ago:

Genesis 15:

5 And he [Jesus] brought him [Abraham] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell [count] the [visible] stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy [children] be.

As we know, Jesus was not speaking only of the physical descendents of Abraham - who are an incredibly large number...

Jesus was speaking of all the peoples of the world who would eventually come to **salvation** and be the spiritual children of Abraham as we read in:

Galatians 3:

29 If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Let's remember that God would have **all men** to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Question: What is important to God? Answer: His Plan of Salvation and Creation of the God Family.

Nothing else is important by comparison.

That is why the entire universe was created.

Man was created to become like God – to be in God’s image.

Let’s consider Passover: Passover is the first step in God’s Plan for mankind. Mankind must be saved from the death sentence that came upon him as a result of sin. God and Jesus Christ are intimately involved in the process. Let’s consider this concept of God’s total **emotional involvement** in the process.

What is man, that thou should magnify him [promote him to excellence]? And that **thou should set thine heart upon him?**”

So many times in the past we have heard ministers touch on the brutality of Passover.

They spoke of the cat o’ nine tails, the torn flesh, the blood and the agony describing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Yes, Jesus paid the greatest price for us – there was indescribable suffering – but there is another aspect of Passover that I would like to focus on in today’s today...

And that is the **emotional part** of Passover. Of all of the Feasts of the Lord, Passover is the most moving, touching and **emotional** of them all. It is an important element of Passover.

We in the Church of God have been reluctant to speak much on ‘emotion’ because we wanted to shy away from the excessive and often misapplied sentiments of the Protestants.

‘Emotion’ is suspect and distrusted in many circles – like in law courts – a lawyer will tell his client **not to be emotional** on the witness stand because emotions are often used as a ploy or tricky maneuver – and therefore not to be trusted.

Let’s look at emotions from God’s point of view. Does God have emotions?

A baby **cries** and a child **laughs**. Brides **cry** for happiness and mothers **cry** for sadness when her children leave home.

Everyone **mourns** at the loss of a loved one – because we were created by God with emotions, sentiments and passions.

We all have feelings – and God is deeply interested in our feelings.

God intended it that way – and it is good that we have emotions!

Jesus, knowing of the destruction that awaits Jerusalem and its inhabitants, broke down and sobbed in a great out pouring of His emotions.

Luke 19:

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and **wept** over it, [*‘klaio*] to weep audibly, sob and wail aloud.

It is a right and natural emotion for the Christian to sympathize with others in their afflictions.

Romans 12:

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

1 Corinthians 12:

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Famous for being the Bible’s shortest verse – John 11:35 should be famous for revealing Christ’s deep felt emotions.

John 11:

35 Jesus **wept**. [*‘dakruo*] to weep silently – to shed tears]

That is deep tender exposed emotion!

Jesus wept because He is like us – emotional, and easily touched the sorrow of death – just as his friends Mary and Martha felt.

That most tender personal emotion of weeping is not inconsistent with pure religion.

Some people want to keep all emotion out of the study of our faith.

The emotions we are considering in this sermon are **not only** our own emotions – but **those of God**.

God is the author and Creator of our sight, feeling, taste, rest, strength, thought, emotion – and all of the senses and traits that make us human.

Does God have emotions? We are being created in His image – Yes of course, God does have emotions!

Let's look further into the life of Jesus Christ:

Notice how in spite of His imminent and impending death, Jesus actually **greatly desired** to observe His last Passover with the men He had trained.

Jesus looked forward to His last Passover with eager anticipation. Jesus knew that He would suffer as no man had ever suffered.

Isaiah 52:

14 As many were astonished at thee; **his visage was so marred more than any man**, and his form more than the sons of men:

Isaiah 53:

4 Surely he [Jesus Christ] has **borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows**: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“Borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:” meant that Jesus would carry the sins of the entire world – and suffer as no man had suffered...

And yet incredibly – knowing what lie just ahead for Him in the crucifixion, Jesus greatly looked forward to this last evening with His disciples.

Luke 22:

14 “When the **hour** was come, [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him [for Passover].

That is the hour after sunset at the beginning of Abib 14th – the prescribed time for Passover.

Exodus 12:

2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the **first month** of the year to you.

Exodus 12:

6 And ye shall keep it up **until the fourteenth day** of the same month:

Notice the **emotion** coursing through the veins of Jesus – after all, He knew that He was the **Lamb slain** from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:

8 ...Jesus Christ is the **Lamb slain** from the foundation of the world.

Luke 22:

15 And He said unto them, With desire **I have desired** [intensely set His heart upon] to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: [Can you imagine the emotion of the occasion?]

1 Peter 1:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, **as of a lamb** without blemish and without spot.

20 Who verily was foreordained **before the foundation** of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Before the world began, Passover was conceived of in the mind of God – Jesus knew full well the **immense price** that He would pay.

*Do we understand the price that had to be paid for our salvation? Emotionally, intuitively, intelligently, instinctively with absolute gratitude to God?

There is no salvation without Passover.

Jesus as the Word of God had – for all eternity eagerly wished for this final Passover – this fulfillment of the Passover – Jesus longed for it greatly.

We see here the emotional and the Tender Side of Passover.

The task of the salvation of all mankind is what has **filled the mind** of God the Father and Jesus Christ since time immemorial.

This desire that Jesus expresses here is a Godly profound craving – a yearning for that hour.

Because on this Passover the Plan of God was sealed – it was as good as accomplished.

Luke 22:

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof [the Passover] until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

How is Passover fulfilled in the kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God **is** the end goal and objective of Passover... That many sons and daughters are **brought to glory** in the Kingdom of God (**Hebrews 2:10**).

We shall be like Him in the Kingdom of God – and that is as glorious Spirit beings.

God sent His Son to this earth to make His grand vision happen – the Plan of God.

John 3:

14 ... Jesus Christ, the Son of man was crucified:

15 That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

The entire world's inhabitants are meant to be saved – that's the Plan of God.

If we would keep in mind that God's Plan extends to the ends of the earth – and that He is not so much focusing on excluding folks from His Kingdom – as He is including them in His plan – there would be more unity in the Church of God.

What has been your greatest passion – your most intense desire, your most fervent hope?

What is that worth? God the Father knew it was worth the loss of His Son, Jesus knew it was worth his life being yielded up on the cross.

God is Holy – set apart – hallowed – is a class alone – we have not yet come near to the throne of God – to His holiness. We are filthy rags by comparison.

And God loves us so much He is willing to forgive and forget.

He asks us to be like He is – forgiving, compassionate, merciful – even forgetful of the pain we have brought to His door – in the like of being responsible for the killing of His Son.

Don't say, "I'm not responsible for killing Jesus." Yes you are! If no one else had ever sinned – Jesus would have died just for you – so you killed Him indeed. And He forgives you. He forgives me.

Every one of us has failed God's Glorious vision for us.

How emotionally involved are we in receiving this exceptional gift? I'll guarantee you that there is **emotion** at the throne of God.

1 Corinthians 11:

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he comes.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, **unworthily**, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29 For he that eats and drinks **unworthily**, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Are we clean -- to invite God into our hearts – have we **discerned** the body of brethren – comprehend who they are – and reconciled?

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Are any of us **worthy** to take Passover? No – because we killed Jesus Christ – every one of us did.

*We are to take Passover with the very **reverence** that God provided it!

*Our heart must be in it to take Passover **reverently**.

Jesus said that not all are washed clean – not all clean - have we a profound **reverence** for Passover?

Look at the **immeasurable price** God was willing to pay for you – and me.

(repeat)

1 Peter 1:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the **precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

We have come short of God's expectations for us. We come far short of being in God's image.

Do we love God from a distance or do we love God intimately and close up. I think that in the Worldwide Church of God days we were a little reluctant to love God and Jesus Christ close up and personal.

I think we fell prey to the world's view of the God of the Old Testament being a little too harsh and stand-offish.

Some groups today lean toward the harsh, strict, authoritarian administration of man-pleasing obedience.

Brethren, let's look to God as a loving, feeling, caring, intimate and compassionate God.

Is the 'love of God' a matter of marching in lock-step and never crossing God by strict letter of the law Commandment keeping?

Or, Do we want to be like Him; Do we try to think like Him; React like Him; Emote like Him? Be Him in Myself? Be His kind of people? As Jesus put it:

John 14:

10 Believe thou not that **I am in the Father**, and the **Father in me**? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the **Father that dwells in me**, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that **I am in the Father**, and the **Father in me**: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

God has not changed. Jesus is tender, loving, and compassionate – with all the **close-up and personal** characteristics and attributes that we are to learn to put on.

*Emotion is a big part of loving God.

Mark 12:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy **heart**, and with all thy **soul**, and with all thy **mind**, and with all thy **strength**: this is the first commandment.

Four things that make us who we are:

With all thy **heart**, and with all thy **soul** [life], and with all thy **mind**; – that is, with all the powers and faculties of **life** itself; or with the affections and emotions, the mind, the understanding, judgment, and will:

Heart - The heart ['kardio'] - thoughts feelings], not only as the seat of the affections, but as the centre of our complex being - physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual.

We are told in:

Proverbs 4:

23 Keep thy **heart** with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Heart means "our emotional nature"-the seat of feeling.

Soul - ['psuche'] breath, spirit, vitality, life, individual existence, our identity.

Mind – ['dianoia'] deep thought, imagination, reasoning, moral understanding.

Strength – ['ischus'] power, might, motivation, forcefulness. 'Strength' is the same as in Deuteronomy 6:5, "with all thy might."

Love – ['agape'] - the essence of God's divine law. tender, unselfish, affectionate.

Taking these four things together, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God "with all thy **heart**," or, with **perfect spiritual sincerity**; with all thy **soul**," or, with the utmost fervor of our being; with all thy **mind**," or, in the fullest exercise of an enlightened moral reason; with all thy strength," or, with the entire life-force of our being!

Feel it – Believe it – Do it.

That is how we are to love God.

End: The Tender Side of Passover