

Jesus' First Paschal Celebration In Jerusalem

While at Bethania, Jesus occupied the same room at Lazarus' as formerly. It was the family oratory and was fitted up like a synagogue. In the center stood the usual desk with the prayer rolls and Scriptures. Jesus' sleeping chamber was a little room adjoining.

The morning after His arrival,

Martha went to Jerusalem to notify Mary Marcus and the other women that Jesus was coming with her brother to the house of the former. Jesus and Lazarus arrived toward midday. There were present at the dinner besides Veronica, Johanna Chusa, and Susanna, the disciples of Jesus and of John belonging to Jerusalem, John Marc, Simeon's sons, Veronica's son, and Joseph of Arimathea's nephews, about nine men in all. Nicodemus and Joseph were not there. Jesus spoke of the nearness of the Kingdom of God, of His disciples' call, of their following Him, and even hinted at His own Passion.

John Marc's house was beyond the city, on the eastern side and opposite the Mount of Olives. Jesus did not have to enter the city in order to reach it. That evening He returned with Lazarus to Bethania. Here and there in Jerusalem it was noised about that the new Prophet of Nazareth was in Bethania, and many rejoiced at the news, though there were others whom it displeased. In the gardens and on the roads of the Mount of Olives there were loitering here and there people, among them some Pharisees, to see Jesus as He passed. They may have heard accidentally or found out in Bethania that He was to return to the city. But no one accosted Him. Some hid timidly behind the hedges and peeped out after Him. They said to one another: "There is the Prophet of Nazareth, Joseph the carpenter's Son!"

On account of the approaching feast, numbers were at work in the gardens and on the hedges. All was being arranged and ornamented, the paths cleared, the hedges clipped and tied up. From all sides poor Jews and laboring people with asses laden with baggage were wending their way to Jerusalem. During the feast they hired by the day in the city and gardens. Simon, who later on was forced to help Jesus carry His Cross, was one of



these people.

The next day Jesus was again in Jerusalem. He was at a house near the Temple, that of Obed, the son of Simeon, also at another opposite the Temple, one in which old Simeon's family had once dwelt. There He partook of a repast that had been prepared and sent by Martha and the other women. The disciples belonging to Jerusalem, about nine in number, and some other devout men were present, but not Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus spoke very lovingly and earnestly of the near coming of the Kingdom of God. He had not yet gone to the Temple.

He went fearlessly about the city, clad in a long, white robe of woven material such as Prophets usually wore. Sometimes there was nothing remarkable in His appearance, and He passed along without attracting attention, but at others He looked quite extraordinary, His countenance shining with a supernatural light. When in the evening He returned to Bethania, some of John's disciples came to Him, among them Saturnin. They saluted Him and told Him on the part of John that very few now came to him for baptism, but that Herod still continued to harass him. That same evening Nicodemus went to Bethania and heard at Lazarus' the instruction given by Jesus.

On the following morning Jesus went to Simon the Pharisee's, an inn or public house in Bethania. He gave an entertainment at which Nicodemus, Lazarus, John's disciples, and the disciples from Jerusalem met. Martha also and the women of Jerusalem were present. Nicodemus scarcely said a word in Jesus' presence. He behaved with reserve and listened in astonishment to His words. But Joseph of Arimathea was more open-hearted, and sometimes even put questions to Jesus. Simon the Pharisee was not a bad man, though as yet very wavering. He held to Jesus' party on account of his friendship for Lazarus, but at the same time he desired to stand well with the Pharisees. During the meal Jesus made many allusions to the Prophets and the fulfilling of their Prophecies. He spoke of the wonders attending the conception of John the Baptist, of God's protecting him from Herod's massacre of the children, and of his now being engaged preparing the ways. He drew their attention to man's indifference respecting the completion of the time marked by the Prophets. "It was fulfilled thirty years ago, and yet who thinks of it excepting a few devout, simple-minded people? Who now recalls the fact that three Kings, like an army from the East, followed a star with childlike faith seeking a newborn King of the Jews, whom they found in a poor child of poor parents? Three days did they spend with these poor people! Had their coming been to the child of a distinguished prince, it would not have been so easily forgotten!" Jesus, however, did not say that He

Himself was that Child.

Accompanied by Lazarus and Saturnin, He visited the homes of several poor, pious sick people of the working class in Bethania, and cured about six of them. Some were lame, some dropsical, and others afflicted with melancholy. Jesus commanded those that He cured to go outdoors and sit in the sun. Up to this time there was very little excitement about Jesus in Bethania, and even these cures produced none. The presence of Lazarus, for whom they felt great reverence, kept the enthusiasm of the people in check. That evening, upon which began the first day of the month Nisan, there was a feast celebrated in the synagogue. It appeared to be the Feast of the New Moon, for there was a kind of illumination in the synagogue. There was a disc like the moon which, during the recitation of prayers, shone with ever increasing brilliancy, owing to the lights lit one after another by a man behind it.

The next day Jesus was present at divine service in the Temple with Lazarus, Saturnin, Obed, and other disciples. A ram was sacrificed. The appearance of Jesus in the Temple produced a peculiar excitement among the Jews. The strangest part of it was that each concealed the impression made upon him; no one mentioned to his neighbor the wonderful effect of Jesus' presence upon him. This was a divine dispensation, in order to allow the Saviour to fulfill His mission. Had they imparted their thoughts to one another, it would have given rise to open anger; but as it was, hatred and rage struggled with gentler emotions in the hearts of many, while others felt within them an almost imperceptible desire to know Jesus better, and took steps to do so through the mediation of others. This was a fast day in memory of the death of Aaron's children.

The disciples and many other devout persons were gathered together at Lazarus'. Jesus taught in a large hall in which was a teacher's chair. He continued the discourse begun in the house of Simon the Pharisee in which He had spoken of the Three Kings, and He drew the attention of His hearers to other facts of the past. He said: "It is now about eighteen years ago since a little " (by which Jesus must have meant a young scholar) "argued most wonderfully with the Doctors of the Law who, in consequence, were filled with wrath against the Child." And then He related to them the teachings of the little .

Jesus with Obed, who served in the Temple, and the other disciples of Jerusalem, went again to the Temple for the celebration of the Sabbath. They stood two by two among the young Israelites. Jesus wore a white, woven robe with a girdle, and a white mantle like those used by the Essenians, but there was something very distinguished about Him. His clothing looked

remarkably fresh and elegant, probably because wore it. He chanted and prayed from the parchment rolls in turn with the others. There were some prayer leaders present. The people were again struck at the sight of Jesus. They were astonished, they wondered at Him, though without having said a word to Him. Even among themselves they did not speak openly of Him, but I saw the wonderful impression made on many. There were three instructions or discourses delivered: one on the children of Israel, another on their departure from Egypt, and a third on the Paschal lamb. On one of the altars was a sacrifice of incense. The priest could not be seen, though the fumes and the fire were visible. The fire could be seen through a kind of grating upon which there was something like a Paschal lamb surrounded by rays and ornaments through which sparkled the fire. This altar stood near the Holy of Holies, its horns apparently entering it. I saw Pharisees praying, some of them wearing wrapped around one arm a long, narrow band that had perhaps once been used as a veil.

About two in the afternoon, Jesus went with His companions into an apartment in the court of Israel, where a repast of fruit and rolls had been prepared. The rolls were twisted like cues, or plaited hair. A steward had been engaged to see to everything. All necessaries could be bought or ordered in the precincts of the Temple itself, and strangers had the right to avail themselves of the privilege. The Temple was so large that it seemed like a little city, and in it one could procure everything. During this repast, Jesus gave an instruction. When the men had finished, the women took some refreshment.

I learned on that day what before I had not known; viz., that Lazarus held a position in the Temple, as amongst us a burgomaster may also be a church warden. He went around with a box and took up a collection. Jesus and His followers remained the whole afternoon in the Temple. I did not see Him back in Bethania before about nine o'clock that night. There were innumerable lamps and lights in the Temple on this Sabbath.

Mary and the other holy women had now left Capharnaum to go to Jerusalem. Their route lay toward Nazareth and passed Thabor, from which district other women came to join them, and then off through Samaria. They were preceded by the disciples from Galilee and followed by servants with the baggage. Among the disciples were Peter, Andrew, and their half-brother Jonathan, the sons of Zebedee, the sons of Mary Cleophas, Nathanael Chased, and Nathanael the bridegroom.

On the fourth of Nisan, Jesus spent the whole morning in the Temple with about twenty disciples, after which He taught at Mary Marcus' and took a luncheon. He afterward returned to Bethania and went with Lazarus to

Simon the Pharisee's. Already many of the lambs brought to the Temple had been rejected by the priests.

Jesus was again in the Temple and in the afternoon taught at Joseph of Arimathea's not far from the home of John Marcus, and near a stonecutter's yard. It was a retired quarter of the city and little frequented by Pharisees. At this period no one feared to be seen in company with Jesus, for hatred against Him had not yet been manifested.

Jesus continued to show Himself still more freely and boldly throughout Jerusalem and in the Temple. He went in with Obed even to the place between the altar of sacrifice and the Temple, where an instruction was being delivered to the priests relative to the Pasch and its ceremonies. The disciples remained back in the court of Israel. The Pharisees were greatly annoyed at seeing Him present at that instruction. Jesus also addressed the people on the streets.

The crowds flowing into Jerusalem kept continually increasing, especially workmen, day laborers, servants, and dealers in the necessaries of life. Around the city and on the open places, crowds of huts and tents had been erected for the accommodation of the multitudes flocking for the Pasch. Many lambs and other cattle had been brought into the city, from the former of which selections had already begun. Numbers of heathens also came to Jerusalem for the feast.

Jesus taught and cured openly in Bethania, even sick strangers were brought to Him. Some relatives of Zachary from the country of Hebron came to invite Him to thither.

He went up again to the Temple. When the priests left after the services, on the place where He was standing among His disciples, Jesus taught them and other good people upon the nearness of the Kingdom of God, the Paschal solemnity, the approaching fulfillment of all the Prophecies and symbols, yes, even of the Paschal lamb itself. His words were earnest and severe, and several priests who were still going here and there in the Temple, were troubled at His discourse and secretly annoyed. Jesus then went back to Bethania, and that night, accompanied by some of the disciples, left with the envoys for Hebron, about four hours to the south.

Preparations for the feast were actively going on in the Temple, and many changes were being made in the interior. Halls and corridors were opened, stands and partitions were removed. The altar could now be approached from many sides, and everything presented quite a different appearance. Jesus, with the disciples and Zachary's relatives, proceeded to Hebron by the route running between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. It was at most a journey of five hours. Passing through Juttah, Jesus entered the neighboring city,

Hebron, where He taught and quietly cured many sick. He returned to Bethania for the Sabbath. His way led high over mountains, whose exposure to the sun made it very hot. The disciples that had come from John to Jesus in Bethania, now went back to the former.

Jesus went to the Temple on the Sabbath and with Obed penetrated into the court containing the teacher's chair, from which later on He also taught. Priests and Levites were sitting on the circular seats around the chair, from which a discourse on the Paschal festival was being delivered. The entrance of Jesus threw the assembly into consternation, especially when He started objections and asked questions to which not one of them could answer. Among other things, He told them that the time was approaching when the symbolical Paschal lamb would give place to the reality, then would the Temple and its services come to an end. The language of Jesus was figurative, and yet so clear that my thoughts instantly reverted to the words of the , When they questioned Him as to how He knew that, He answered that His Father had told Him, but He did not say who that Father was.

The Pharisees were highly displeased, though at the same time full of astonishment. They did not venture to contradict Him. Access to that part of the Temple was not permitted to all, but Jesus had entered in quality of Prophet. In His last year He even taught therein.

After the Sabbath, Jesus went to Bethania. I had not as yet seen Him conversing with Mary the Silent. Her end, I think, was near, for she appeared greatly changed. She was lying on the ground on a gray carpet, supported in the arms of her maids, and she was in a kind of swoon. She appeared to me to have drawn nearer to this world of ours, as if she had ever been absent in spirit, but now she appeared to have been brought back again to life. She was now to know that this Jesus here in Bethania, who lived in her own time and in her own vicinity, was He who had to suffer so cruelly. She was still alive in order to experience through compassion, in her own person, the sufferings of Jesus, after which she was soon to die.

On the night of Saturday, Jesus visited her and conversed long with her. Part of the time she sat up on her couch, and part of the time walked around her chamber. She had now the perfect use of her senses. She distinguished between the present and the future, she recognized in Jesus the Saviour and the Paschal Lamb, and she knew that He was to suffer frightfully. All this made her inexpressibly sorrowful. The world appeared to her gloomy and an insupportable weight. But most of all was she grieved at man's ingratitude, which she foresaw. Jesus spoke long with her of the approach of the Kingdom of God and His own Passion, after which He gave her His blessing and left her. She was soon to die. She was tall and extraordinarily beautiful,

white as snow and shining with light. Her hands were like ivory, her fingers long and tapering.

Next morning, Jesus cured openly in Bethania many that had been brought to Him, among them some strangers that had come up for the feast. Some were lame, some were blind. There came to Him also several men connected with the Temple who called Him to account for His actions and conduct. Who, they asked, had authorized Him on the preceding day to take part in the conference held in the Temple? Jesus answered them very gravely, and again spoke of His Father. The Pharisees dared not enter the lists against Him. They felt a certain terror in His presence; they did not know what to make of Him. But next day, Jesus taught again in the Temple. All the Galilean disciples that had been at the marriage feast in Cana had now come to Jesus. Mary and the holy women were stopping with Mary Marcus. Lazarus bought many of the lambs that had been rejected as not fit for the feast and had them slaughtered and divided among the poor day laborers and other workmen.