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Barley, Flesh, and Life: The Bread of Life Discourse and the Lord's Supper

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The Gospel of John is often noted for its cultic imagery.¹ Central are the Jewish feasts and the temple, as the terminology proper to them saturates John's narrative. In fact, Mary Coloe states that the temple "is not just one symbol among many, used by the community to express who Jesus is for them; for the Johannine community the temple is the *major* symbol," a symbol that appropriates to Jesus the whole of the tabernacle/temple cult.² In other words, Jesus in his person and work fulfills—bringing to its ultimate conclusion—everything that belongs to the tabernacle/temple cult—its rites, ceremonies, sacrifices, feasts, furnishings, and sacrificial elements (bread, lambs, light, water, and blood). Thus, the Gospel of John shows that as Jesus fulfills the old tabernacle/temple cult, he establishes at the same time a new cultus, a new form of worship, a new means by which the Lord would dwell among his people to be their God. This new cultus would be tied not to a geographical place or to specific days but to Jesus himself.

With this in mind, this study will examine the feeding of the 5,000 and the Bread of Life discourse to mine the significance of the details John provides—the feast of Passover, the barley loaves, the use of the word *flesh*, and the life that eating this flesh gives—and their relationship to the Lord's Supper.

¹ See J. K. Howard, "Passover and Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967): 330–331, and Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday, 2011).

² Mary Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 3; emphasis original.

I. The Feast of Passover, Galilee, and Barley Loaves

The mandate and institution of the Feast of Passover is given in Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, and Deuteronomy 16. It was to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month (Nisan), “when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight”(Exod 12:6). The very first Passover was the means by which the Lord would deliver his people from the bondage of Egypt, but more specifically from their slavery to the Egyptian gods, so that the Lord would dwell with them and free them for divine service:³

It is the Lord’s Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt (Exod 12:11-13).

The blood that was to be smeared on the doorposts and lintels was a sign for them, for when the Lord saw the blood, he would pass over them, and nothing would destroy them. Thus, the blood was not simply a negative sign, a sign that they would not be destroyed; it was also a positive sign, a sign that they would live. It marked the people of Israel as those who would remain alive. It was a sign of life before the Lord, for the blood has the life in it (Deut 12:23; Lev 17:11).⁴

After this initial Passover, each subsequent celebration of the Passover was to be a pilgrimage feast, for the Passover sacrifice was to be offered at a holy convocation before the Lord in the place where he chose to make his name dwell (Exod 12:16; Lev 23:4; Deut 16:2). It was given as an everlasting ordinance and was to be for them a meal of remembrance of what the Lord had done for the people of Israel when he rescued them from the bondage of Egypt and slavery to their gods in order that they may freely serve the Lord in the act of being served by him in the wilderness (Exod 12:14).

³ The Book of Exodus makes use of a rich pun on the word עֲבָדָה. It is used interchangeably either for work as a slave and slavery or as service of the Lord and worship. Thus, Israel, the Lord’s firstborn son, is freed from slavery to Egypt and their idolatrous gods for the service of the Lord, that is, for divine service (e.g. Exod 3:12; 4:22-23; 6:6-9).

⁴ Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1989), 52-53.

The feast that serves as the context for the feeding of the 5,000 and the Bread of Life discourse is “the Passover, the feast of the Jews” (John 6:4). However, two elements within John 6 cause difficulty for understanding this as the Passover celebrated on 14 Nisan. The first element deals with location, and the second with chronology.

The Feast of Passover was a pilgrimage feast. All were to travel to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast where the Lord had made his name dwell (Deut 16:2). This is the only feast of the six mentioned in John’s Gospel that Jesus is not described as either making pilgrimage to, or already in, Jerusalem; rather, he is in the area around the Sea of Galilee (John 6:1). “He miraculously feeds 5,000 (6:1–15), walks on the Sea of Tiberias (6:16–21), proclaims himself the ‘Bread of Life’ (6:22–59) and suffers a schism among his disciples (6:60–71); but at no point is he described as ‘going up’ to Jerusalem to observe this festival.”⁵ If John’s purpose in writing his Gospel is to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire tabernacle/temple cult, why would he not be in Jerusalem observing this foundational feast of the Jews? Furthermore, why are none of the others mentioned in the Bread of Life discourse concerned about heading toward Jerusalem? This feast was not optional. It was an everlasting ordinance, an ordinance that if not observed was punishable by death.⁶

Furthermore, the mention of barley loaves that Jesus used for the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:9 presents a difficulty with chronology. Barley came to harvest at the beginning of the year between the months of Nisan and Sivan.⁷ But according to the law of *hadāš* (new produce), this newly harvested grain could not be consumed for non-cultic purposes until its firstfruits had been offered at the Waving of the Omer, as commanded by the Lord.⁸

⁵ Michael A. Daise, *Feasts in John: Jewish Festivals and Jesus’ “Hour” in the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 143.

⁶ “But if anyone who is clean and is not on a journey fails to keep the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people because he did not bring the Lord’s offering at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin” (Num 9:13).

⁷ “The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the emmer were not struck down, for they are late in coming up” (Exod 9:31–32). See also Jacob Milgrom, *A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 277, and Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus, The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 157.

⁸ Daise, *Feasts in John*, 105.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the Lord. And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the Lord with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings (Lev 23:9-14, cf. Deut 16:9-10).

This offering of the sheaf of the firstfruits was to be reaped on the evening, at twilight, of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15 Nisan), the day after the Feast of Passover (14 Nisan), and the offering was to be made on the following morning (16 Nisan).⁹ That barley is in view for this offering is clear for two reasons. First, it "was the only cereal that would have ripened at the time specified." Second, "it is stated plainly to be such in Second Temple and early Rabbinic traditions."¹⁰ If the Passover mentioned in the feeding of the 5,000 has in view the Passover of 14 Nisan, then the barley loaves provided by the young boy would be illicit because the offering of the sheaf of the firstfruits had not yet taken place. The use of barley at this time for non-cultic purposes was contrary to the law of *ḥadāš*.

What, then, is John referring to when he writes, "the Passover, the Feast of the Jews was at hand" (John 6:4)? Is any light shed upon the text? Is our understanding helped if perhaps the Passover referred to in the Bread of Life discourse is the Second Passover, or Little Passover, mentioned in Numbers 9:9-12?

⁹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 197-205.

¹⁰ Daise, *Feasts in John*, 105. See also Jud Davis, "Acts 2 and the Old Testament: The Pentecost Event in Light of Sinai, Babel, and the Table of Nations," *Criswell Theological Review* 7, no. 1 (2009), 31-34; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 277; and Levine, *Leviticus*, 157.

II. Second Passover and John 6

In Numbers 9, Moses identifies two reasons for not celebrating the Passover: 1) because a person is ritually defiled by contact with a dead body, or 2) because he or she is away on a long journey. This does not mean, however, that they never celebrate the Passover; rather, they are to celebrate the Passover one month later (14 Iyyar).

And there were certain men who were unclean through touching a dead body, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day, and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. And those men said to him, "We are unclean through touching a dead body. Why are we kept from bringing the Lord's offering at its appointed time among the people of Israel?" And Moses said to them, "Wait, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you."

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If any one of you or of your descendants is unclean through touching a dead body, or is on a long journey, he shall still keep the Passover to the Lord. In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight they shall keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones; according to all the statute for the Passover they shall keep it (Num 9:6-12).

This Passover, in distinction from the regular Passover, came to be called Second, or Little, Passover.¹¹

In his *Life of Moses II*, Philo mentions this Second Passover. He relates the account of Numbers 9 as an act of mercy on behalf of Moses and the Lord. The Israelites who were unable to observe the regular Passover due to ritual uncleanness had become so because they were in mourning for their recently deceased relatives. Thus, they had a twofold grief because they not only mourned the death of their family members but also because they were barred from the feast because of it. In a merciful response to this predicament, the Lord, says Philo, established a perpetual Passover on the fourteenth of the second month for anyone who found himself in similar circumstances.¹²

The regular Passover and its pilgrimage were to be kept on pain of death. The Second Passover, however, was a contingent festival, hinging

¹¹ Despite being called the Second, or Little, Passover, oftentimes it is referred to simply as Passover, just like the regular Passover of 14 Nisan. See Daise, *Feasts in John*, 118-138.

¹² Philo, *Life of Moses II*, 41, 225-232.

upon whether the first, regular Passover was missed. This would explain Jesus' lack of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, for the observance of the Second Passover would have been rendered unnecessary if he had already observed the first (John 2:13).

Besides the two previously mentioned elements (the disparity in location and chronology) that commend the Passover of the Bread of Life discourse as the Second Passover, the primary theme of the Bread of Life discourse is also suggestive of this. That theme is the manna event in Exodus. As Michael Daise points out:

That John 6 turns on manna tradition is beyond question. Jesus launches his Bread of Life discourse when his interlocutors cite it [John 6:31] . . . the Jews and Jesus' disciples "murmur" (γογγύζειν), after the manner the Israelites did when they first provoked God to give them quails and manna and when they later tired of the manna in favor of meat . . . the initial lack of bread (6:5), Jesus' question on how to feed so many, the two fish (as meat), the multitude's eating till satisfied, the collection of leftover fragments, the christophany on the water, the greater interest in eating than believing or obeying, the demand for more food, manna as bread and a bread from heaven, the Father as giver of that manna, eating flesh, eating Jesus' flesh instead of manna and Jesus as the manna and word that proceeds from the mouth of God.¹³

The Second Passover is relevant here because of the date of the first giving of the manna as recorded in Exodus 16:1, "They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt." Daise explains that

since Exodus considers "the beginning of months" to be the one in which the First Passover was observed (Exodus 12:1-2), the second month "from their going out from the land of Egypt" would have been the second month of the year. This is made explicit in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, which identifies that month outright as 'Iyyar, "They moved from Elim . . . on the fifteenth day of the month of 'Iyyar, that is, the second month from their going forth from the land of Egypt."¹⁴

Even though Second Passover, according to Numbers 9:11, is to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the second month, the "observance was to span, like the First Passover, 'between the evenings' (בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם);

¹³ Daise, *Feasts in John*, 138-139.

¹⁴ Daise, *Feasts in John*, 141. Cf. Exodus 16:1; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Pentateuch* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 2005).

Num 9:11), that is, into the next morning, the fifteenth day of the second month. Thus, the giving of the first manna falls on the same day as the observance of the Second Passover."¹⁵

If, therefore, the Passover mentioned at the beginning of Jesus' Bread of Life discourse is understood as the Second Passover, a number of difficulties of geography and chronology are avoided, while at the same time a fuller understanding of the discourse's theme is gained. The Second Passover, which was initially instituted for those unable to observe the First Passover due to ritual impurity by contact with a corpse, ties together the themes from Exodus' Passover ritual (eating of the flesh of the Passover lamb) and the giving of manna (bread from heaven) and quail (flesh from heaven) in the wilderness wandering to the Bread of Life discourse: life versus death, eating bread and meat (flesh) from heaven, and the Lord's word (command and promise) that bring it about.

III. The Flesh That Gives Life

Most controversial, both for its original and present-day hearers, in the Bread of Life discourse is Jesus' mention of his flesh. His statements about eating his flesh made those who were following him grumble at this difficult teaching. And it is a difficult teaching. This is perhaps most understandable for the discourse's original hearers. But what is it about this text that makes it difficult for present-day hearers, especially Lutherans? Why do Lutherans, who take Jesus at his word in the Synoptic Gospels that the bread eaten and the wine drunk are in fact his body and his blood, grumble at this teaching? What, if anything, are we missing? What is it about the word *flesh* that rouses our defenses?

Given the context of the Bread of Life discourse as stated above, Jesus' use of the word *flesh* is perhaps not as strange as it first seems. The time of the Second Passover was near, which was to be observed by those who had recently suffered the loss of relatives by death. Their ritual impurity from contact with a dead body kept them from observing the regular Passover. Thus, the consequences of death were intensified. They suffered, as Philo stated, a double mourning—not only the loss of a member of their family but also exclusion from the rest of the community during a time of celebration. Combine this with the miraculous multiplication of the barley loaves in the feeding of the 5,000, which was given at Jesus' command (legitimately used because the offering of the firstfruits of the barley harvest had already taken place on 16 Nisan) and the manna tradition (the

¹⁵ Daise, *Feasts in John*, 142.

giving of bread and flesh from heaven at the Lord's command) from Exodus' account of Israel's wilderness wandering, and the picture comes into focus: viewed altogether, Jesus is setting forth a new Passover and manna tradition. He is establishing a new temple/tabernacle cult, a new form of worship, a new way in which God would dwell and remain with his people (John 1:14; 2:16-21; 14:1-7).

Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, whose flesh and blood not only mark them for life but actually give life. He is the Bread of Life, the new manna, come down from heaven, sent by the Father. He is the firstfruits of the barley harvest, waved and offered to the Lord on the day of his resurrection (1 Cor 15:20). Jesus is raised from the dead on the day of the Waving of the Omer, 16 Nisan (John 20:1). Thus, he is the food that does not perish (τὴν ἀπολλυμένην). He is the food that remains (τὴν μένουσαν), that is left over (περισσεύω), that endures (cf. John 3:16, 6:12-13; 6:26-27) and fills twelve baskets full, just as the barley loaves in the feeding of the 5,000, for he is not dead but alive. Thus does he give; he distributes, according to his word (which is Spirit and life) his flesh and his blood to be consumed, which give life to those who feed (ὁ τρώγων) upon it.

Some have noted the switch from the verb ἔφαγον to τρώγω in John 6. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* argues that the verb τρώγω is more earthy and physical than ἐσθίω, the aorist of which is ἔφαγον. Τρώγω literally means "to gnaw, to bite, to chew." It does not support a metaphorical use, a spiritualization, like its counterpart ἐσθίω. The movement from the verb ἐσθίω to τρώγω indicates a movement away from a purely metaphorical, or spiritual, reading to a reading that includes the physical (John 6:51-58). Thus, "to eat" no longer simply means receiving Jesus' giving of himself by faith in his words, but now includes the reception of that self-giving by physical eating.¹⁶ Craig Koester argues that the use of τρώγω

actually shows that John 6 should not be connected with the supper. In 6:54-58 Jesus promised that the one who "eats" would abide in him and live forever, but at the last supper the word "eat" is used only for Judas, who was united with Satan, not Jesus (13:18, 26-27), and who found destruction rather than life (17:12).¹⁷

¹⁶ See Leonhard Goppelt, "τρώγω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. ed. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 8:236-237.

¹⁷ See Craig R. Koester, "John 6 and the Lord's Supper," *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990): 433.

One must, however, simply ask: does Judas' eating in John 13:18, 26–27 take away Christ's own promise in John 6:54–58? Perhaps a better explanation is that Judas' eating shows what happens to those who eat without faith (SD VII 59–72). Taken in this way, one of the chief arguments against the sacramental reading of John 6 disappears—John 6 lacks the *manducatio impiorum*, *manducatio indignorum*. With this, then, John 6 is in line with St. Paul's warning to the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor 11:27–32).

Recent scholarship, however, calls into question this hard distinction between *ἐσθίω* and *τρώγω*. David Hasselbrook points out that by the time the Gospel of John was written, the word *τρώγω* was the common form for "eating," that is, chewing and swallowing, with no special emphasis on chewing in the present tense. He writes:

In this Gospel, we find that *τρώγω* occurs five times and the aorist forms of *ἔφαγον* occur fifteen times. However, rather than viewing the aorist forms of *ἔφαγον* as aorist forms of *ἐσθίω*, John's usage and the full diachronic history of *τρώγω* itself suggest that in John's Gospel *ἔφαγον* is very likely serving as his aorist form of *τρώγω*. Or, to put it another way, for John, *τρώγω* is serving as the present tense form of *ἔφαγον*, a verb that held and continues to hold the dominant position as the past tense verb for "eating." This latter point is relevant for John's other uses of *τρώγω*, all of which occur in the Bread of Life discourse in chapter 6 (6:25–59). After using *ἔφαγον* in verses 26, 31 (two times), 49, 50, 52, and 53, he switches to *τρώγω* in verses 54, 56, 57, and 58, and then finally ends again with *ἔφαγον* in the latter half of verse 58. One who looks at the pre-New Testament usage of *τρώγω* will probably find this shift to be significant in terms of meaning of verb forms. However, one who looks at the post-New Testament oral history of *τρώγω* will find this shift necessary due to changes in aspectual focus or usage, such as is the case with the interchange of *ἐσθίω* and *ἔφαγον* in other writings of the New Testament (e.g., Matt 14:16, 20, 21; 15:32, 37, 38; Rom 14:2, 3, 6, 20, 21, 23; 1 Cor 8:7, 10, 13; 9:4, 7, 13; 11:20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34).¹⁸

This is, in fact, what one finds in the Bread of Life discourse:

The past tense eating of the manna by the fathers (which, by the way, involved some kind of chewing and was done on a regular basis) and their subsequent past tense death is contrasted with an ongoing eating of Christ and the ongoing life it brings. The contrast here is not be-

¹⁸ David S. Hasselbrook, *Studies in New Testament Lexicography: Advancing toward a Full Diachronic Approach with the Greek Language*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2nd series, vol. 303 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 143.

tween a general eating and an eating that involves more chewing. The significance lies, rather, in what was/is eaten and the need for the ongoing eating of Christ.¹⁹

The contrast is between eating (chewing and swallowing) the flesh from the wilderness and what that brings, and eating (chewing and swallowing) the flesh of Christ and what that brings.

The Passover lamb was to be roasted and then physically eaten (Exod 12:8; cf. John 18:28).²⁰ The blood of the lamb was to be applied physically to their doorposts to save their firstborn sons from death, thereby marking them for life, a sign to the Lord that when he sees the blood he will pass them over (Exod 12:13; John 19:34-37).²¹ The manna and quail were to be physically eaten (Exod 16:8). This food was the flesh (BHS: אֶשְׂרָה; LXX: κρέα; Exod 12:8; 16:8) that the Lord provided to bless them so that he would dwell with them and be their God, and they would be his people. It preserved them as the Lord's firstborn son (Exod 4:22-23), who is "born not of blood, or the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). This food was the flesh that the Lord provided to his people to give them life: life from out of the death of slavery to the Egyptians and their idolatrous gods and life in the midst of death as they wandered the wilderness of Sin. In this way, the external (physical) and the internal (spiritual) are combined, without separation.²² The two belong together, for the spiritual comes and is comprehended by means of the physical. The spiritual is enacted in ritual. Thus, they ate flesh (κρέας). They ate it in faith at the Lord's command and with the Lord's promise. It was the flesh of the sacrifice, the flesh of the Lord's giving, but it was dead flesh (Deut 12:20-28).

The word κρέας always refers to dead flesh, flesh that has no life in it. It is never used in the Old Testament for living flesh (e.g., Gen 9:4). Thus, the Israelites could eat κρέα, but they could not eat σάρξ. They could eat dead

¹⁹ Hasselbrook, *Studies in New Testament Lexicography*, 143-144.

²⁰ Eating the Passover is the celebration of the Passover in John 18:28, "They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover." See also Matt 26:17; Mark 14:12-14; Luke 22:8-11.

²¹ For a fuller discussion of the relation between the sign of the blood in Exodus and the signs in John's Gospel, see Joseph A. Grassi, "Eating Jesus' Flesh and Drinking His Blood: The Centrality and Meaning of John 6:51-58," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 17, no. 1 (1987): 24-30.

²² See a fuller discussion of this in Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 147-192.

flesh, but they could not eat living flesh (Deut 12:20–28). And so they ate the flesh provided by the Lord. They ate the Passover lamb, the manna, and the quail. They ate dead flesh and they died.

But the flesh that Jesus promises to give in the Bread of Life discourse is not dead flesh. He does not give us his *κρέα*. He gives us his living flesh, his *σάρξ*.²³ The flesh he gives is his living, life-giving, Spirit-filled, risen flesh (*σάρξ*), which he gives along with his blood. It is the same flesh that the Word, the perpetual ordinance and everlasting covenant of the Father, took up in order to dwell, to tabernacle, among us (John 1:14). He gives it with the promise that his living, risen flesh and blood will give life, and not just life to live another day, another week, month or year, but life to live eternally (John 6:53–58).

This is the bread of his flesh and the drink of his blood that would be the means by which Jesus would continue to dwell among his people. It was how he would remain with them.²⁴ It would be the means by which they would celebrate the New Passover, when God marks his people, his firstborn sons, not for death but for life with the blood of the Lamb who was slain.

How would the beloved disciple, the women at the foot of the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus celebrate the Passover? How would they physically eat the flesh of the Lord's Passover sacrifice? How would they, as firstborn sons by the will of God, be marked for life and not death by the blood of the Lamb of God? They could not, for they were ritually impure by contact with a dead body, the body of the crucified Jesus. Theirs was a double mourning, as Philo stated. They mourned the death of their Lord, and they mourned the inability to keep the Passover.

But they would be marked for life. They would be marked by feeding on the Bread of Life come down from heaven, given by the Father to die on

²³ The Greek word *σάρξ*, like the Hebrew word *בָּשָׂר*, has a wider range of meaning. It can refer to meat, dead flesh, or a corpse. It can be spiritualized in a theological sense to mean sinful flesh. It can refer to man, or that which is opposite of spirit. And it can refer to sexual organs. The Greek word *κρέας*, however, always refers in the Old Testament to meat that is for eating, sacrificial meat, or a corpse of man or animal. I thank John W. Kleinig for this insight and his help. See Friedrich Baumgärtel, Rudolf Meyer, and Eduard Schweizer, "*σάρξ*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 7:108–109.

²⁴ See John 1:14; 2:16–21 and compare to John 14:1–7. Jesus is the tabernacling presence of God on earth. He replaces the temple, which is his Father's house. The Father's house that has many rooms (*μοναί*), or dwellings, is related to the word for remaining (*μένω*). For more on this, see Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 157–178.

the cross and rise again on the third day. The day he was raised was the day of the Waving of the Omer, the day of the offering of the firstfruits of the barley harvest (John 20:1). In Jesus' resurrection, the Bread of Life—the firstfruits of the barley harvest, the same bread multiplied by his word and at his command—was offered to the Father, so that whenever Christians gathered to eat of this heavenly bread, they fed on the living flesh (σάρξ) of the crucified but risen Jesus. And when they did so, it was not illicitly under threat of condemnation, but with the promise of his blessing to mark them as children of God who shall live. By eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood, they received the sign that when the Lord saw it the angel of death would pass over them (Exod 12:13; John 19:34–37).

Thus, the resurrection of Jesus as the firstfruits of the harvest of those who have died can be seen as the ritual act that authorizes the eucharistic consumption of Jesus' flesh and blood as the Bread of Life. He is not the food that perishes, but that which endures and remains unto eternal life, for he is risen from the dead. In this way, Jesus' resurrection institutes and legitimizes the use of his living flesh for consumption. The offering of the firstfruits has been made, and what remains is authorized for consumption. Everything that was left over, all that was gathered together filling twelve baskets full, is now ready for distribution, for this is the food that does not perish but endures to eternal life (John 6:12–13; 6:26–27).

There is now no more need for a Second Passover; there is no more need for the regular Passover. Jesus is the Passover. He is the Lamb of God, the sacrificial flesh offered on the cross, roasted in the Father's wrath against sin, to be eaten unto eternal life.²⁵ He is the manna and the quail, the heavenly food provided by the Father for life. He is the food that remains when all others have perished. He is the leftover fragments saved up in twelve baskets for future use so that none will perish. All who believe will eat this food and live eternally (John 3:16; 6:39–40). Where death once reigned, now life has overcome death, and the wilderness of Sin is left behind for the Promised Land. This is indeed reason for eucharist. It is the Eucharist—the Word of God becoming flesh in bread and wine, thus becoming flesh in all those who consume it, who receive him in it and believe in him, in order to dwell with his people and to make them children, firstborn sons, of God, who are born, "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13–14). And receiving this, their double mourning is no more. Every tear is wiped away

²⁵ John's Gospel places the crucifixion on the Day of Preparation of the Feast of Passover so that Jesus' death coincides with the slaughter of the lambs for the feast. See John 1:29; 19:14; 19:31–36 and compare with Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12.

from their eyes (Rev 7:17), for they shall live. They will be raised up on the Last Day (John 6:39-40). They shall see their loved ones again because they have seen the Son, crucified yet risen, and have fed upon his life-giving, risen flesh and blood.