

PASSOVER

A Guide for Christian Understanding and Celebration

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PASSOVER MEAL
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Discover The Last Supper for the First Time

A HOLIDAY THAT SPANS THE AGES

PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD BEFORE CHRIST - AN INTRODUCTION

The first Passover occurred over 3500 years ago in Egypt. It is, by far, the oldest celebration continually kept by any group of people in the history of mankind. Exodus 12:18-20 instructed the people of God to sacrifice a lamb, place its blood on the doorpost of the house, and eat it

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PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD AT THE TIME OF CHRIST - ORIGINS OF 'COMMUNION'

During His last week on earth, our Lord took portions of the Passover meal of His time and extended the meaning of the elements of the meal to remind us that God not only intends to protect His people in this life, but He also intends to save our eternal souls from death.

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PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD IN THE FUTURE

Will we celebrate Passover when Christ returns?

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Placing blood on the doorpost before the first Passover



The Passover Lamb



Unleavened Bread

The primary symbols
of Passover are the
sacrificial lamb,
unleavened bread and
bitter herbs.

“When I see the blood,
I will pass over you.”

A PROMISE TO THE FAMILY OF GOD

PASSOVER BEFORE CHRIST (from page 1)

with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Each part of the Passover meal symbolized something that was important for the people of God to remember about His plan of redemption.

To appreciate the background of the feast, read Exodus 12:1 - 13:10. There you will find that **Passover**, which was an evening meal that took place as the sun went down on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Abib (also called ‘Nisan’), and **Unleavened Bread**, which was a subsequent week-long festival that began as the Passover meal was eaten, were originally a commandment from God to mark and save His people from the death that would befall others who did not have a heart to heed His words.

The first **Passover** was not simply a spiritual lesson for the people of God, but was a promise connected with a commandment to act. Without actually displaying obedience to God’s commandment to mark their houses with the blood of the sacrificed lamb, they would suffer death in their ranks just the same as any others who did not take His words seriously. Passover demonstrates that God expects faith to produce action and obedience.

Therefore, redemption was a one sided covenant with a required response: God provided the way, and it was required of the people to consummate the salvation He offered through the physical act of

marking their homes with the blood and then leaving Egypt when told to do so.

This covenant offer of deliverance was not limited to native Israelites. Plenty of evidence had been given to all the people of Egypt concerning the Lord’s ability to save and to destroy. This was demonstrated in the plagues sent through Moses and the protection afforded the Israelites (see Exodus 7-11). In fact, as a result of these great signs, not only did the subsequent exodus from Egypt include native Israelites, but the “Israelites” were a “mixed multitude”, including Egyptians who followed God’s path away from Pharaoh, meaning both Jews and Gentiles were included as God’s story continues (see Exodus 12:37-38). Whosoever was given the desire to trust and follow the Lord would celebrate this great deliverance, remembering it through the Passover we celebrate even to this day.

In the Land, the Lord would lead His people to inhabit, it would be challenging to remain committed to Him and His ways. Gracefully, He offered that “mixed multitude” a commandment to annually partake in a Passover feast that included three symbolic elements: lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. These elements were the essence of the Lord’s prescription for recalling the deliverance He had provided for the people. The lamb was used to represent



the means by which He may consider a person or household worthy of relationship with Him. The Unleavened Bread symbolized the way in which His people should live their lives - “quickly following” His voice as they immediately left “without waiting for the bread to rise”, and “without sin”, since yeast (leaven) is a symbol for sin throughout the Scriptures. Bitter herbs provided a reminder of the bitter life of slavery to anyone other than the Lord Himself, therefore causing them not to “look back” from whence they had come.

The commandment to remember the great deliverance was issued to the people immediately after the deliverance had occurred (Exodus 12:42-49). Note that the Scriptures command not only the “native Israelite” to keep the Passover, but also the “stranger” (us) who decides to follow the Lord (verses 48-49). The message in this is clear: To all who would put their faith and hope in the Lord, He will deliver and would come to expect the life they live to reflect obedience to His voice. All such people should celebrate the Passover.

More can be read of the original Passover in Leviticus 23:1-8, Numbers 9:1-14 and Deuteronomy 16:1-8, 16.



“Do this in remembrance of Me.”

(DO “WHAT” IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM?)

PASSOVER AT THE TIME OF CHRIST (from page 1)

Over the next 1500 years, by the time Jesus came, some traditions had been added to the original three elements of the Passover meal as described in the Scriptures. It is notable that our Lord did not shun these particular added features, but used some of them to reveal His role in our spiritual redemption.

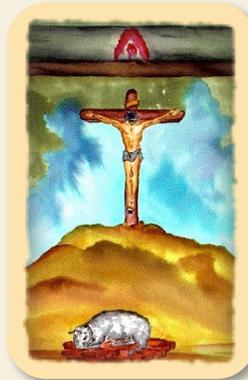
The Passover Seder (Hebrew, “order”) took its extended form about 200 years before the coming of Messiah. By the time of Christ, the rabbis had established a prevailing “Haggadah, that is, a routine or “telling” of the story of the exodus that was read during the Passover meal each year. Typically, there were variations on the basic telling by each rabbi or sect of Judaism. The final Passover meal our Lord shared with His disciples was where He established the telling of the Passover meal we have today as Christians. As is true in different denominations of the Christian faith, different degrees of fidelity to Scripture were represented among the various Jewish teachers at the time of Christ with regard to Passover. We may obviously be confident that, if we refer to the Old Testament Scriptures and allow Jesus, our “rabbi” as He is called in Scripture, to guide our thinking from there, we will do well.

So how does Jesus teach us at His “Last Seder” to celebrate this Passover meal? The points made by the Lord in instructing His disciples how to “Do this (Passover meal) in remembrance of Me” was to add to the already understood remembrance of God’s deliverance from physical bondage, an appreciation and remembrance of the spiritual deliverance He would soon offer mankind on the cross. He had previously explained in John chapter 3 that “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so too must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life”.

In the Passover, our Lord shows us that what was previously true for people’s physical salvation would now be true in Him for their spiritual salvation. He was not saying that the commandments were not effective for guiding our life as we live

on earth, but because of sin, there is an even deeper spiritual truth with regard to our soul where His deliverance is needed too. That aspect of deliverance may be seen in the elements of Passover when we come to know Jesus as Messiah.

So, Passover, the feasts and other commandments serve to remind us in this life of how God delivers us physically and spiritually. We look back at how obedience to God delivered His people in the past.



It is important to recall God’s great works and to remember His miracles by looking back while celebrating the feasts. However, it would be entirely incomplete to think that there is not an even greater message of deliverance from judgement and death itself that we should remember as well. This is how Christ asked us to celebrate the feast of Passover.

Consider our Lord’s instructions as they pertain to the elements of the Passover meal as it stood in His time:

He identified Himself as the **Lamb** (John 1:29). Not only was the lamb of the Passover the element that provided the blood that caused the angel of death to “pass over” God’s people in Egypt, but Jesus’ blood shed on the cross is the mark that every believer trusts will deliver them from punishment and death in the lake of fire.

He used the bitter herbs as a sign of turning back to sin and the bitterness of such a turn. Judas was the one who “dipped” the bread in bitter herbs and then betrayed the Lord. In like fashion, the same element was to remind those coming from Egypt of the bitterness of turning back to the life from which they had been delivered.

The Passover element of **Unleavened Bread** is broken, hidden away, and brought back later, much as Jesus was at His death, burial and resurrection. This is the same bread we use at the communion table.

“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.”

EZEKIEL 36:27

Following this bread, a *third cup* of grape juice is used in the seder meal and is called the “cup of redemption”. Likewise, Jesus used this cup to establish it as the cup of the “New Covenant in His blood (Jeremiah 31: 31-34, Ezekiel 36: 24-32), shed for all for the forgiveness of sins”. Not only was that third cup significant for the redemption of God’s people from slavery in Egypt, it was now a remembrance of His people being delivered from eventual judgement and death.

In the “abbreviated Passover meal” we share throughout the year and call “communion”, the broken, unleavened bread and the Cup of Redemption are shared. These two elements take on primary significance to the Christian as they relate to the Lord’s redeeming sacrifice.

Truly, the Passover had become not only a meal of historical truth by recalling the physical protection God has afforded His people, it had also become a meal recalling the continual protection He would offer their very souls through the blood of an even greater Lamb, His Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

PASSOVER IN THE FUTURE (from page 1)

After the Lord’s death, the Temple stood for an additional 40 years. During those years, what do you think occupied the minds and hearts of the believer’s? Consider the Passover feast one year after His death: People once again went to Jerusalem with their lambs, offered them in sacrifice, gathered with family and friends at homes and enjoyed the fellowship remembrance of God’s deliverance. Would the disciples have done the same? Recall what the Lord’s instructions were to them before His death? Were they to disobey the “everlasting ordinance” written by Moses because of Messiah’s atoning death on the cross, or were they to follow both the “everlasting” commandment spoken by Moses to keep the Passover as well as obey the commandment of Jesus Himself as He told them to “Do this (Passover with additional meaning and significance) in remembrance of Me.”? To be obedient to the everlasting ordinances given them by God in Scripture and to celebrate the Passover rightly, they would have done both. Taking their lambs to the temple,

they already had the Lord on their minds. Imagine the conviction and remembrance that flooded their hearts during those first few annual festival years. The lessons taught by the Master, the pain and suffering He endured on their behalf all came rushing back, driving them to a greater desire to tell others about Him during and following the feast. Should we do any less than those first believers? Try to place yourself this year at the Last Supper for the first time.

Looking to the future, Scripture tells us that much will be the same. Ezekiel writes of a time when the Temple will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 40-47), where Messiah, the prince, will reign and where all Israel and all peoples will come to worship the King of Kings. Sacrifices will once again be offered, not for general atonement, but in remembrance of Him by those who once rejected, but now receive, Him as Lord and God.

Enjoy this Passover for how it may remind you of the hand of the Lord in the past, present and future. Recall the exodus, look forward to the future, but, most of all, rejoice in your salvation.

