

When Death Passes Over

Israel's religious calendar began in the spring – the month of Abib ([Ex 34:18](#)), renamed Nisan after the Babylon captivity. It falls in our months of March-April. It's a season of new growth and new life.

The first spring feast was the Passover Festival. While it was held on the 14th day of the first month, preparations started on the 10th day. It was so closely tied to the Feast of Unleavened Bread that began the very next day that they came to be viewed as one. But they are separate feasts.

Leviticus 23:4-5 “These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. ⁵ On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.”

The name “Passover” comes from the event it commemorates – when the destroying angel literally passed over the homes that were covered by the blood of the lamb. The name was used to refer to this event, as well as the lamb that was sacrificed.

Passover originally began in the Israelite homes. Hebrew families gathered around the table for the meal, dressed to travel in haste.

Last study I mentioned that each feast helped highlight an attribute of God. In celebrating Passover: Israel praised God as their Deliverer.

The Passover event fulfilled God's promise to Abraham in **Genesis 15:13-14** “Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

It was also mentioned that each Feast worked in 3 important ways:

1. Passover commemorated a past mighty act of God

You can read how it was celebrated in **Exodus 12 – read vs 13.**

The first Passover coincided with the last of the Egyptian plagues. As the final plague, God determined to kill the firstborn male in every family in Egypt – human or livestock.

The Israelites could be spared, but not simply because of their bloodline. Instead, they were spared because of the Blood! God gave explicit instructions in **Exodus 12** for the slaughtering of a year-old unblemished male sheep, or goat, and the placement of the animal's blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes of each house. The destroying angel then passed over any house covered by that blood.

2. Passover portrayed a future aspect of Christ's ministry

The Passover foretells the role of Jesus' blood in covering the believer, in saving them from the death they deserve. Jesus died at the time of the Passover because Jesus was the true Passover lamb. **John 19** tells us that it was about noon on the Passover Day when Jesus was sentenced by Pilate. **Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, and Luke 22:44-46** tell us it was the 9th hour – 3 p.m. when Jesus gave up His life.

With the building of the sanctuary and subsequent temples, some of the ritual was modified –

sacrifice was done at the temple not at the homes, blood was applied at the altar, eating it became restricted to doing so only in Jerusalem. This “evolution” of Passover, teaches us another important lesson - While we need to adapt our practices and methods to changing times and needs, **mankind can never change or modify the truths & principles God establishes.**

Even with the changes, this feast was to be an epic symbol of God’s redemption from Egypt, and future hope. Luke tells us ([Luke 2:41](#)) that Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover. It was at the Passover, when Jesus was 12, that his parents accidentally left him behind. When they found Him, 3 days later, in the temple, teaching the teachers, He said: [Luke 2:49](#) “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” They didn’t understand his statement. But Jesus was already understanding His identity and mission, and was preparing to become our Passover Lamb. Jesus learned the lessons the feasts taught concerning Himself. In [Luke 2:52](#) we read “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

In the book [Desire of Ages \(DA\) 78.1](#) we read: “For the first time the child Jesus looked upon the temple. He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers He bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service. Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own life. New impulses were awakening within Him. Silent and absorbed, He seemed to be studying out a great problem. The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour.

When He presented Himself to be baptized - to begin His public ministry, John the Baptist said “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” [John 1:29](#). He said it again the next day, [vs 36](#) “Behold, the Lamb of God”

Jesus celebrated earth’s final Passover with His disciples. [Luke 22:14](#) says “When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.”¹⁵ Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” I believe He was referring to the marriage supper of the lamb ([Rev 19:9](#)).

After eating the Passover supper, Jesus instituted a new celebration, The Lord’s Supper – Communion - to replace it. [John 13:2](#) tells us that (the Passover) supper was over when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. He then took and broke the bread and drank the wine with them. He instituted a new symbol of deliverance. When Christians partake of His blood, symbolized by the fresh grape juice, and His body, symbolized by bread with no yeast or leavening, they show they accept Christ’s act of spiritual deliverance from sin and eternal death.

By becoming our substitute for sin, and paying our debts, Jesus can ultimately fulfill that covenant promise and take His followers to Heaven, and the New Earth, which is the real Promised Land.

The Passover feast was abolished at the cross! Why wouldn’t everyone who accepts Christ and His

atonement blood want to celebrate communion every opportunity they can, not the feast? Paul said to the **Galatians in Ch 4:9-10** “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years.”

3. It motivated/inspired/taught Israel to live holy lives before a Holy God.

In this ancient feast, no foreigner or stranger could participate unless they chose to be circumcised and become like the Israelites (**Ex 12:43-49**). The father of the family would select a perfect, unblemished, lamb or goat less than a year old on the 10th day of the month (**Ex 12:4**). But it wasn't killed until 3+ days later – on the afternoon of the 14th day (**Ex 12:6**) it was slaughtered, and the blood was applied.

Consider how carefully the family cared for that special chosen lamb to keep it safe and unblemished. The lamb and family must have developed some close interactions. Knowing how children bond to animals, **I wonder how many might have come to look at it as a beloved family pet, only to later see the knife plunged in and its blood drawn out to protect their homes? The lesson on how an innocent sacrifice was made in order to set the captive free would have been powerful!**

God's justice demands atonement for sin, but His mercy provided the means for that atonement.

The Passover lamb is a fitting symbol for Christ who dwelt among men - especially for the 3+ years in His ministry of redemption – to set man free from Satan and sin.

The lamb had to be entirely eaten, what couldn't be eaten had to be burned up; nothing could be left (**Ex 12:10**). Christians should be people who are totally assimilating the life of Christ into their own (**John 15:1-5**). Jesus wants to abide in our hearts today, so we can eventually abide with Him in person forever.

While sanctification is a process, we can't use “process” as an excuse for spiritual laziness, because every provision was made for Israel to observe the feast. Even if a man was traveling “out of town” or he was made ritually unclean he could still celebrate it at the next appointed time – which was the very next month not the next year – but it had to be in the same fashion:

Numbers 9:9-11 “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord's Passover. ¹¹ On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it.”

If you were an Israelite and wanted to remain an Israelite, you could not, not celebrate this feast, or you would be removed from God's people. If you haven't yet experienced the full gift of redemption, it's not too late, not yet. But the means of receiving it never change – by grace through faith in the shed blood of Christ (**Eph 2:8**).

Every provision has been made for man. Christ's blood has already paid the debts of all and secured the redemption of all who will accept it. Accepting it is our choice, and a vital one:

Numbers 9:12-13 says “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,¹⁰ “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord’s Passover.¹¹ On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it.¹² According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.¹³ But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.” Jesus said in **John 6:53** “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” Paul said to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 5:7** “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

Purge the leaven: notice the words of **1 John 1:6-9**, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

May I pose a question? When we are absolved and cleansed from sin – when we are FORGIVEN - what does it look like? In practical terms, what does it do for us in our relationship with the Father? Answer: Complete restoration of our relationship with God!

In **Matthew 18:22-35**, Jesus illustrates the importance of truly accepting God’s forgiveness because it would be impossible for us to pay the debt: A man owed his king 10,000 talents. When he learned that he and his family would be sold into slavery he pleaded “be patient and I will repay everything”. That would have been impossible, and was impossible as the debt was anywhere from 20 years worth of wages to several life times worth. Nevertheless, forgiveness was extended. But right after that, the first servant put another servant in prison for failing to pay him 100 pence he owed. This second man also asked for patience, and promised to repay all or about 100 days of wages – that was a doable scenario. The king had extended forgiveness to the servant who owed him an impossible debt, but the fact that this servant refused to do the same for one who owed him a measly amount in comparison was simply a demonstration that he hadn’t accepted the king’s forgiveness. If he had, he would have been generous to also extend forgiveness to others.

So let me ask another question: If we are covered and cleansed by the blood of Christ, if the character (law) of God is written on our hearts, if by grace we imitate the example of Christ; then in practical terms what would our relationships look like with others when we say we forgive? What would anything less than our faithful attempt at complete restoration of relationships with others indicate about our acceptance of Christ’s blood? Please note I said a faithful attempt – if the other person(s) remains unwilling or unkind God does not call you to remain in an abusive relationship(s). But He does say in **John 13:34**, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

If Passover was a premier feast in Israel, shouldn't Communion be a premier celebration to Christians? Its good to have reminders helping point us to Christ! **I'm glad the lessons of the Passover feast are like a compass, whose needle is always pointing to Christ. I'm even happier that Christ restores us to the Father.**