

# Jesus our Passover

There are five biblical holidays in Israel: Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot, Rosh Hashana, and Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashana (Feast of Trumpets) – New Year (1 Tishri – September-October). This highly holy holiday begins with the blowing of the ram’s horn (shofar) and begins what is currently called the Days of Awe. This ten-day period is biblical but was enforced as a national day of reflection and full penitence in the Talmud until the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Yom Kippur – This is the Day of Atonement (10 Tishri – September-October). This was the day Israel was to come together and make an annual national sacrifice so that they would temporarily appease God’s justice.

Sukkot – Feast of Tabernacles (15 Tishri – September-October). This is also called the Feast of the Ingathering. This is to commemorate the time when Israel lived in huts in the wilderness after their escape from Egypt. This holiday lasts for seven days.

Shavuot – Pentecost (5 Sivan - May). This is also known as the Feast of Weeks. This is a completion of the seven-week period between Passover and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Pesach – Passover (15-22 Nissan – March-April). This is both a day and a week-long feast. Passover proper is on the first day, 15 Nissan, then the rest of the week is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

## Passover

Passover is the main holiday that identifies Israel; this is who they are. This holiday was not instituted just as a memorial to what God has done but also foreshadows what God will do.

There are three main passages in the Hebrew text that provide information about the Passover: Exodus 12:1-13, 23-27, 42-51; Numbers 9:1-14; Deuteronomy 16:1-8.

Exodus 12:1-13 is the origination of the Passover; it was given to provide safety from the “striking” of the land of Egypt. It is the blood that is the sign; the blood covers the household indicating it is under protection through a substitutionary atonement.

Exodus 12:23-27 is the ordinance for observing Passover in the land as a memorial, and the use of the ritual as a memorial was to help future generations remember the events that took place in 1446 BC.

Exodus 12:42-51 gives the rules for believing Gentiles to participate in the Passover as long as they are identified with Israel and have been circumcised.

Numbers 9:1-14 provides the annual date for the observance of Passover, gives rules for those who are unclean (they have to wait a month), and restates the statute for the Gentile believers among them.

Deuteronomy 16:1-8 emphasizes the need to remove leaven from the home as a representation of the haste of leaving Egypt. They ate unleavened bread because they did not have time to let the bread rise, but it also had other significant points of interest.

These passages detail the Passover, and we will see how they were used to foreshadow the coming Christ.

1. The ceremony begins with the observance of unleavened bread.
2. An unblemished lamb would be the sacrifice.
3. The blood of the lamb would cover them.
4. The Passover was the means for the deliverance of all who identified as or with Israel and the Lord.

### *Unleavened Bread*

As we have read, there was a restriction on leaven during the Passover week. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word is not equated with sin. The forbidding of leaven in offerings was symbolic of the pre-deliverance days in the land of Egypt. The Passover then points to the unleavened bread as the transition from slavery to freedom. During the rest of the year, the people were free to have leavened bread, but the Passover was to be a picture of the time of transition (Deuteronomy 16:3).

In the New Testament, leaven is used in this regard in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 – This is specific and refers to the sins of before. Paul refers to the Pentateuch understanding in that we are freed from the bonds of slavery. Sin was the taskmaster; Jesus freed us from sin (penalty and dominion) therefore, we should live with respect to our freedom. Notice that Paul states, “you are unleavened because Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.”

### *The Lamb of God*

Relating to the Passover Lamb, John the Baptist testifies in the Gospel of John, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). It is safe to say that this is a reference to Christ being the final Passover to finally take away sin. The expression the Lamb of God means Jesus is the Ultimate Passover lamb.

The Passover lamb, as described in Exodus 12, is a foreshadowing of the person of Jesus Christ in the fact that the lamb had to be “unblemished.” In Exodus 12:5, the Hebrew word translated unblemished is “תָּמִים” (*tāmîm*) this adjective has multiple definitions, including but not limited to complete, perfect, unimpaired, and innocent. The lack of physical defects in the lamb is a symbol of the absolute Godly perfection in the Messiah (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The symbol of the unblemished male lamb for the Passover was to draw attention to the Lord’s eventual provision of the sinless Messiah.

### *The Blood Sacrifice of the Lamb of God*

The sacrifice of the lamb was to be a provision for the people. God gave the people a way to escape the curse of death that came upon the land. Why has death come? What are the wages of sin? Death is the penalty for sin, and all have sinned. Therefore, the Israelites needed a means of escape. They were as guilty as the Egyptians. The difference is that they did not believe God and did not apply the means of escape.

The Israelites, God’s selected nation, were not automatically exempt from the curse but rather had to have the death of an innocent and unblemished lamb take the curse for them. This was a life exchange, the blood sacrifice of the lamb for the curse of death of the firstborn, a sacrificial atonement. This also is pictured in the Messiah Jesus in that His unblemished life, sinless perfection, was given as a sacrifice to pay

for the sins of the world (1Tim 2:5-6; Galatians 1:4). In the Passover, the blood that was collected and used to paint the door posts and lintel was an outward demonstration of the lamb that had been sacrificed and thus protected all the firstborn that were in the house.

### *Not Exclusive to Israel*

In Numbers and Deuteronomy, God commands that the Passover is not for Israel only but for all who live in their land, both the alien and the Jew, there is one statute for the Passover concerning all nations living in the land of Israel (Numbers 9:14). This is a good representation that the Passover is not solely for National Identity but is available to all who desire to identify with YHWH, Israel, and the coming Messiah. Likewise, Jesus came unto His own (Israel) but His sacrifice was beneficial to all. The Passover Lamb (Messiah) was manifold in its functions. It was the substitution atonement for Israel as a Nation (Heb 2:17), it was the cutting of the New Covenant (Heb 10:1-18), and it was a sufficient sacrifice for sin for the whole world (John 1:29, 1 John 2:2). The inclusive nature of Passover being for both Jew and Gentile is understood in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the New Testament.

### *Results of the Passover*

Not only did the death of the Lamb provide life from certain death for the firstborn, but also a means for escaping the bondage of slavery. These results are so similar in nature to the redemption offer for all who believe that to deny Jesus in the Passover is nearly inconceivable.

“...there are striking similarities between this Passover lamb and Jesus Christ... Candidly, they are just too striking and too many to be accidental. It is really these similarities that have convinced Christians throughout the ages that the lamb is a picture of Christ. Let us look at one striking similarity: both the Passover lamb and our Lord were slain for the same reason” (Waltke, Bruce).

It is vital to point out that the sacrifice of Jesus paid for sins, but that does not mean that all are redeemed. Just as the Passover protected the firstborn and provided the reason for Egypt to let Israel go, in the Exodus account, it was not said of Israel that they had been redeemed, saved from the Egyptians until they crossed the Red Sea and God defeated the Egyptian army by drowning them in the sea (Exodus 14:30-31). After the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Egypt, the entire congregation believed. All the details of Exodus 4-12 were considered, and Israel was redeemed physically as a nation, and they were individually, spiritually redeemed when they believed.

Currently, there is no national, physical redemption for the Gentile believers. The events of Jesus Christ on the cross are spiritual for us. The Final Passover paid for all sins, and individual spiritual redemption takes place when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Passover, the redemption was from Egypt to the Promised Land. This imagery is symbolic of the unbeliever being moved from a position of death and bondage of sin and into life, freedom in Christ Jesus.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:11-14).

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the foreshadowing of Jesus the Messiah in the Passover is clear.

“Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1Cor 5:7). The words of Paul, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, are a testimony to the reality of the Messianic picture in the Passover account recorded in the Pentateuch. This lesson serves as an overview to demonstrate how the Passover account in the Hebrew Scriptures is a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ as we remember His sacrifice and rejoice in His resurrection.

The unleavened bread is a picture of leaving the old sin master behind. Jesus Christ is the unblemished Lamb of God. His sacrifice was a substitutionary atonement for the sins of the whole world. The Passover is available to all, not just Israel. Finally, the Passover in Jesus Christ is redemption for all who believe.