The Passover Feast

A prophetic picture of the atoning death Christ

The coming of the Messiah$^1$ is the central theme of the Old Testament. From the very beginning, right after the serpent deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, God speaks of the One who is coming that will bruise the serpents’ head (Genesis 3:15). In the book of Psalms we read where King David prophesies about the death of Christ saying, “They pierced my hands and my feet… And for my clothing they cast lots” (Psalm 22:16-18). The prophet Isaiah foretells the atoning death of the Messiah and compares Him to “a lamb that is led to slaughter” (Isaiah 53:5-7). And John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testaments prophets, when he saw Jesus coming toward him declared, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The record of the Old Testament makes it clear that the Messiah was born to die. The Father sent Him from heaven for this purpose. It wasn’t plan B. It wasn’t because something went terribly wrong. At exactly the right time in history, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born, became a man and in obedience to His heavenly Father’s will; died on a cross to take away the sin of the world (Galatians 4:4-5).

Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). Shortly after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two of His disciples as they were traveling on the road to Emmaus and “beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27). Jesus did indeed fulfill all that was written and prophesied about Him in the Old Testament.

The Passover Feast is one of these amazing prophetic pictures that Christ has fulfilled. The apostle Paul calls these Old Testament events “shadows of things to come.” And goes on to explain that “the reality, the substance, the solid fact of what is foreshadowed, the body of it, belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:17 Amplified Bible).

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$^1$ Messiah means Christ or the anointed one
Just as the Passover was the first feast that the people of Israel were commanded to observe; so is Christ’s atoning death on the cross the first truth we must believe if we are to be free from slavery to sin, saved from the judgment it deserves and recipients of eternal life (John 3:16-19, Romans 6:23, 10:9-10). It is not enough to just know and understand that Christ has fulfilled all these things; we must believe in our hearts that Christ is truly our Passover Lamb.

Your Lamb Shall Be Unblemished

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household.

Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb.

Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. (Exodus 12:3-5)

At the beginning of Passover week, on the tenth of the month, Jesus entered Jerusalem to the sound of the multitudes shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:29-40). Jesus then entered the temple and with authority drove out those who were buying and selling! “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” he proclaimed. These events correspond with taking the Passover lamb into the house on the tenth of the month (Exodus 12:3). The Israelites were to take a year old, male lamb into their households until the fourteenth day of the month in order to inspect it for flaws. It had to be a lamb without blemish (Exodus 12:5). Jesus, the Lamb of God, had come into the house and over the next few days the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, the Pharisees and the Sadducees would all confront and question Him, but they would find no flaw (Luke 20:1-8, 19-26; Matthew 15:22-40, 21:23-27). Even after they arrested Jesus and brought him into the house of the high priest, they could only bring false witnesses against Him (Mark 14:53-59). And finally, when they brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate to have Him condemned to death, Pilate could only state the truth saying, “I find no guilt in Him” (John 18:38). The Lamb was indeed unblemished (Hebrews 4:15).

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2 Atoning or atone means to appease, reconcile or propitiate (1 John 2:2, 4:9-10)
Also during this time, while in the house of Simon the Leper, a woman came to Jesus and anointed Him with a very costly perfume. This beautiful and extravagant act of worship reveals many truths about Jesus. In the context of this study, it shows us that the Christ, the anointed one, was being prepared for His burial after becoming the sacrificial Lamb (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9).

**A New Covenant**

Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails.

And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. (Exodus 12:7-10)

Not long before Jesus and His disciples were gathered for the last meal they would have together before His death, Judas Iscariot had already plotted to betray Him (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:1-6). Knowing that He could not be able partake of the actual Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus shared a meal with them that explained that He was about to become the Passover meal. The New Covenant was about to be instituted and Jesus was expressing this through what we call the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:1-20). Just as the Passover lamb’s blood was shed and put on the doorpost and lintel to save the Israelites from the last plague, so Jesus’ blood was about to be shed and His body broken for the salvation of the whole world.

**Kill it at Twilight**

You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

(Exodus 12:6)

At the very time that the Passover lambs were being killed, Jesus was being crucified (Matthew 27:46-50; Mark 15:34-37; Luke 23:44). While all of Jerusalem was busy
preparing the Passover meal with the lambs that were being sacrificed, Jesus was uttering His last words, “It is finished” (John 19:30). What was finished was God’s plan for the salvation of all people through the death of His Son. All that the Passover represents had been fulfilled in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7).

**The Blood of the Lamb**

For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against 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 live; 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. (Exodus 12:12-13)

Just as the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Israelites from the judgments of God and redeemed them from slavery, so does the blood of Christ save all who believe from the judgment of God and redeem them from slavery to sin (1 Peter 1:18-20). The blood of the Lamb cleanses us, gives us a brand new start and frees us from a guilty conscience (Hebrews 10:22).

**Feast of Unleavened Bread**

In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day.

For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born.

Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread. (Exodus 12:18-20)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the night of the Passover meal. Leaven represents sin. During Passover week the Israelites would search their houses to make sure there was no leaven anywhere in their homes. They would then make bread for the feast without any leaven. The unleavened bread represents how Christ has made us free of sin.
and how he wants us to continue to live and celebrate our new life, “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Feast of the Firstfruits

Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. (Exodus 23:16)

The day that Jesus was resurrected was actually the day that the Feast of the Firstfruits was celebrated (Exodus 23:16). The Israelites would bring the first fruits of their harvest to the temple as an offering. Jesus fulfills this on that very day by being the first of those to be resurrected from the dead (1Corinthians 15:20-23).

Jesus also keeps His own words when he said, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). We can follow the sequence of events described in the New Testament that lead us through these three days. The day after Christ was crucified was the High Sabbath or the Passover Sabbath (Mark 15:42). Being a Sabbath day, the Israelites were commanded to cease from all labor. They would have prepared all the unleavened bread before this day. The following day, being a normal workday, we are told that some of the women who followed Jesus bought spices to take to His tomb to anoint Him (Mark 16:1). The next day they rested on the regular weekly Sabbath, the last day of the week (Luke 23:56). Then the following day, the first day of the week, they came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away from the entrance and when they went in they saw a young man dressed in a white robe who said, “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen!” (Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:2-6; Luke 24:1-2; John 20:12). Christ indeed had risen from the dead having fulfilled the true meaning of the Passover Feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of the Firstfruits!

Study Activities:
• Review Chart: The Passover Feast
• Read Exodus 12:1-18 and other Bible passages shown on chart