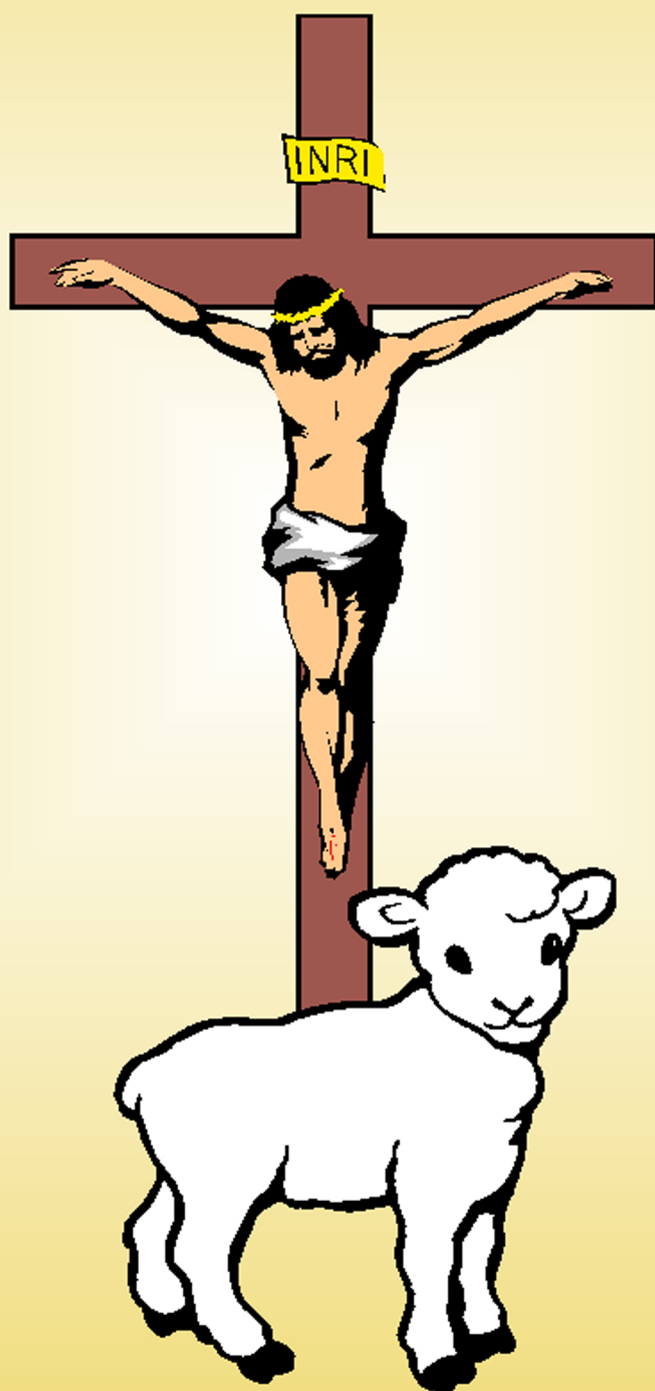


Feast of Passover



FEAST OF PASSOVER

The Passover is first mentioned in the twelfth chapter of Exodus.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.” (Exod. 12:1,2)

Subsequently we find that the “beginning of months” occurred in the spring of the year. This first month was originally called Abib, meaning “green ears,” and later it was known as Nisan. Abib marked the start of the *ecclesiastical* year of the Israelites, whereas the seventh month of their year, the month of the Day of Atonement, was the beginning of their *civil* calendar year. Later the seventh month became more prominent in connection with Jewish observance, and the commencement of the civil year superseded the arrangement set forth in the Book of Exodus.

“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this [first] month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.” (Exod. 12:3)

The beginning of the spiritual year actually has more significance for Christians than for Jews. The lamb represents the Lord Jesus Christ personally, as declared by John the Baptist when he saw the Master approaching: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is referred to as God's Lamb in several places (see chapters 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 22).

On the tenth day of the first month, a lamb was separated out of the flock in preparation for ultimate sacrifice. And thus our Lord Jesus, as the antitypical Lamb of God, went up to Jerusalem to his death and entered the city on the tenth day of the month, which was five days before the Feast of Passover. The schedule in the type was as follows:

10th day of first month: lamb selected

14th day of first month: lamb slain

15th day of first month: Feast of Passover began

Five days before his crucifixion, Jesus made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, and the multitudes spread palm branches in his way, declaring, "Hosanna to the son of David" (Matt. 21:6-9). The appropriateness of the time period in the Book of Exodus is seen when we realize that it was fulfilled in the person of our Savior.

“And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.” (Exod. 12:4)

If the number of family members in a particular household was insufficient to wholly eat the lamb on the designated evening, then that family was to find another small household so that together, under one roof, they could eat the one lamb.

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats.” (Exod. 12:5)

Just as the literal lamb had to be “without blemish,” so the sinless nature of Jesus constituted the sacrifice on behalf of the world and, hence, was the basis of the ransom needed to liberate mankind from the penalty of sin and death (1 Tim. 2:5,6; 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:19). Jesus is sometimes referred to as the “spotless Lamb of God.” In harmony with the thought of the *man* Christ Jesus, the lamb was to be a *male* of the first year. The lamb was taken from the sheep, although as an expediency—that is, if for practical or economical reasons, it was inconvenient for a family to have a lamb—the Israelites had the option of using a kid of the goats. Nevertheless, the lamb had the cardinal role in the Passover observance.

**“And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.”
(Exod. 12:6)**

In harmony with the type, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the tenth day and died on the fourteenth day. Just as the “whole assembly of the congregation of Israel” killed the literal lamb in the type, so Jesus was killed by his own people in the personages of some of the leading religious members of the nation. The King James marginal reference for “in the evening” is “between the two evenings.” Thus even the hour of the day was prefigured in the type, showing that it was necessary for the Messiah to die not only on the corresponding fourteenth day of Nisan (or Abib) but also at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, which was between the two evenings of 12 noon and 6 p.m. Gentiles reckon time similarly today. Noontime is called 12 *p.m.*, meaning that afternoon (the lesser evening) begins at noon, and the darker evening starts around 6 p.m., which corresponds to sunset. Thus there are two evenings: the lesser evening commencing at noon, when the sun is at the height of its brilliance but is beginning to decline, and the 6 o’clock hour. The midpoint is 3 p.m., the exact time when Jesus died.

“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.” (Exod. 12:8,9)

Every detail has signification for the Christian. The flesh of the typical lamb represents the justification that the Church receives through Jesus. When we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and appropriate to ourselves the merit of his sacrifice by consecrating and dedicating ourselves to him and to his service, we are justified by his perfect humanity, which was laid down as the corresponding price for man’s redemption. And the night in which the lamb had to be consumed in the type pictures the nighttime of the Christian or Gospel Age.

The lamb was to be “roast with fire”; that is, it could not be sodden or boiled but had to be roasted by the *direct* heat of the flame. There was to be no ameliorating factor in the sacrifice, no intervention of water or any other substance. The scorching of the sacrifice by the direct flame prefigured the fiery trials that came upon our Savior, eventuating in his death.

Unleavened bread was served with the Passover lamb. Since leaven is a symbol of sin, the *unleavened* bread pictures that the Christian, in feeding upon the Lamb of God, eats the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth: the *pure Word of God*. The Scriptures

are needed for an appreciation and recognition of Christ as the Savior.

What do the bitter herbs represent? Not only does the Christian accept Jesus as his Passover Lamb and the Word of God as a necessary part of the antitypical observance, but also he recognizes and appreciates the providential hard experiences that are permitted in the present life. As the Apostle Peter said, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the *fiery trial* which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Pet. 4:12). “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Thus eating the bitter herbs represents the Christian’s appreciation for and his acceptance of the hard experiences that occur in connection with partaking of the merit of Christ’s offering. Just as the literal bitter herbs increased the Israelites’ appetite for the lamb, so difficult trials draw the rightly exercised Christian closer to the Master.

When the lamb was roasted, it was to be *thoroughly cooked* to picture that Christ had to *die*, not merely to suffer but to be, as it were, *wholly consumed*. In the process, all of the blood was cooked out of the meat. The animal was roasted “his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof”; that is, it was not to be separated or cut up in any fashion but was to be offered whole.

Therefore, the Passover lamb represents Jesus personally and no one else.

“And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.” (Exod. 12:10)

The Christian must eat the Lamb antitypically or figuratively throughout his *entire* consecrated life. He is to continually feed upon Jesus until the resurrection morning. Moreover, from a dispensational standpoint, the Lamb is to be finally consumed at the end of the present age, which will occur in the near future. In other words, the Church of God has been feeding upon the Lamb of God throughout the entire Gospel Age, and when this Lamb is entirely consumed, when the full number of the Church class have made their calling and election sure, that will correspond in time to when the lamb in the type was fully consumed. Then will come the great deliverance of the world of mankind from their bondage to sin and death.

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’S passover.” (Exod. 12:11)

In observing this feast, the Israelites had to be fully clothed as if ready to go on a journey at a moment’s notice, and they were to eat in haste. Their shoes had to be on their feet and their staff in

their hand. What a powerful picture! If the natural Israelites today were to observe the Passover ritual as originally designed, the celebration would have great significance. It would not be hard to follow the type—to get a lamb and to roast it, etc. If the Jews were to go back to the Word of God, if they were to return to the *source* of information and cut through all of the human tradition, how meaningful the lessons would be! Imagine their eating the Passover supper just as in the type!

We are not criticizing the Jews only, for Christians have similarly erred in following human tradition such as with the Mass and other arrangements that are not taught in the Word of God. If Christians would just go back to the original Scriptures of the New Testament and study the development of the Church, how wholesome and valuable the information would be! Hear what the Scriptures say about the traditions of men:

“And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own *tradition*.... Making the word of God of none effect through your *tradition*, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.” (Mark 7:9,13)

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the *tradition* of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col. 2:8)

The Israelites were to eat *in haste* because their deliverance was to come very shortly after midnight when the destroying angel would pass through and see the blood on the lintel and doorposts of each house. The antitype pertains to the Christian and his consecration to God. When one gives his heart wholly to the Lord, he is not to put off his consecration until some future date. Many of us mean to do certain things for the Lord, but we procrastinate, whereas the picture shows that we have to start right away, for death could come tomorrow or next week or next year. We must bend our energy, time, and attention to getting the whole Word of truth, to feeding upon the Lamb, and to zealously serving God. Thus not only would we be partaking of the Lamb, but also we would realize that our deliverance as Christians is drawing nigh.

**“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.”
(Exod. 12:12)**

In the arrangement with the Passover lamb, which was slain in the afternoon, eaten in the evening, and entirely consumed before morning, *only the firstborn* in the household were liable to death. Of course the Israelite families involved did not want to see their relatives or children die, so they were very strict in observing the type. They properly applied the blood and did

exactly what they were told. The Bible does not tell of even one Israelite who failed or refused to observe this first Passover as set forth by the Lord God. The nation observed the Passover loyally, so there is no recorded incident of any firstborn Israelite's dying in the original picture. The spiritual lesson is that in this present Gospel Age, *only Christians*, pictured by the firstborn, are really under judgment in the full sense of the word. Not until the morning of the next or Kingdom Age will the world of mankind, who are pictured by the rest of the nation of Israel, be judged in connection with their antitypical passing over the Red Sea, which is another symbolism.

On the night of the original Passover, not only were the firstborn of Egypt smitten, both man and beast, but also God executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt, that is, upon certain statues and idols that were worshipped. In those Egyptian households that did not have blood on the doors, all of the firstborn including their cattle died throughout the entire land, from the house of the Pharaoh down to the humblest servant. What a tragedy for the Egyptians to experience! And in the houses of their gods, the judgment caused statues and idols to tumble and fall. A similar judgment took place years later on the Philistines, who had captured the Ark of the Covenant from the Israelites and placed it in their pagan temple of worship. The fish god, Dagon, fell on its face and broke (1 Sam. 5:2-4).

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exod. 12:13,14)

While the nation has been faithful, even to the present day, in observing the Feast of Passover, more primary importance has been attached to the seven days of unleavened bread that followed the feast than to the eating of the lamb. This diversion from the practice in the original Passover has obscured for the Jews the higher spiritual meaning.

“Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.” (Exod. 12:15)

From the first day until the seventh day, the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread. The Apostle Paul informs us in the New Testament, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7,8). The antitypical seven-day feast

can be viewed two different ways: (1) from the standpoint of an individual's own life and (2) from a dispensational standpoint. Regarding the *individual* standpoint, the first day represents the beginning of one's consecration, the very day one gives his heart to the Lord and thus starts to feed upon the unleavened bread of truth. The seventh day, from a practical perspective, represents his death. Stated another way, the feeding takes place in the present age from the time one is begotten of the Holy Spirit as a Christian until his death. Regarding the *dispensational* standpoint, the seven days represent the entire Gospel Age and the development of the Church class, the Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7). The first day applies to the period immediately following Jesus' death, and the picture continues up until the seventh day, the end of the Gospel Age soon to occur. During this time, Christians feed mentally on the Word of God and the Lamb, appropriating the benefits to themselves.

“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.” (Exod. 12:7,22)

The Israelites were to take the blood of the lamb and strike it upon the upper lintel and the two side posts of the doors of their houses. Not only did the lamb have to be slain and its blood applied to each individual household, but also God provided specific instructions for applying the blood. The blood was struck in the form of a cross, that is, overhead across the top of the door with a *downward vertical stroke* of the arm followed by a *horizontal motion sideways*, splashing both side posts of the door with the blood, thus making the configuration of a cross. The type indicated that Jesus would be crucified with his arms suspended or stretched sideways, with his crowned head of thorns above, and with his nailed feet below. The Israelites dipped a bunch of hyssop in the blood and then *smote* the lintel and the two side posts. Smiting with the blood prefigured that Jesus would die a *violent* death.

A similar prefiguring of the Cross occurred each year on another occasion. On the Day of Atonement, blood was sprinkled upon and across the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. Again the type showed that Jesus would have to die not only a violent death but also a death of crucifixion.

“And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

“But every man’s servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

“A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.” (Exod. 12:43-45)

No stranger was to eat of the lamb, for only those who were circumcised could partake. In the antitype, therefore, only the consecrated, those who are sympathetic to the cause of truth, the “church of the firstborn,” should feed upon the Lamb of God (Heb. 12:23). Christ died on behalf of the whole human race, but throughout the seven stages of the Gospel Age, only those who have recognized and appropriated his merit by accepting him as Savior have been under the blood and feeding on the Word of God. The last members of this honored class are soon to be completed. Then, following a great Time of Trouble, will come the grand era of redemption for the remainder of mankind. Praise God that the marriage of the Lamb is imminent and that the last members of the Bride class are making themselves ready, preparatory to the blessing of all people!

Frank Shallieu