

Passover

1Peter 1:15-19

But as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Introduction

We have studied “Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread” when we looked at the Exodus. However, as we celebrate Palm Sunday, we know that Friday is coming. This is the week that we remember the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus, on the night that He was betrayed, celebrated Passover with His disciples. The Passover meal foreshadows the suffering of Christ and our Redemption! The holy standard of living to which God calls us is exemplified in the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Historical Origin

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are Biblical feasts given by God to the nation of Israel.

The origin is found in Exodus 12:1-13:10. God is freeing His people from slavery in Egypt. This is a picture of mankind in slavery to sin.

God placed a death sentence on the firstborn of man and beast. To escape death, each home was to sacrifice a lamb without spot or defect and place the blood on the door posts of their home.

Historical Origin

No bones were to be broken in the lamb. The Israelites were also to eat the meal standing up in preparation for deliverance. However, in the Passover celebration, they ate lying down as a testimony they had been delivered from slavery. They were to eat unleavened bread (no yeast and not allowed to rise)

That night the angel of death went across Egypt and the first born in every home died. The exception was the houses who believed God and had applied the blood of the lamb to the door. The lamb died in the place of the first born.

All the Passovers since this time have been a memorial of God's deliverance from Egypt.

Observance of Passover

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was observed for seven days in Biblical times. Today many Jews celebrate for eight.

While the Temple stood, special burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sin offerings were presented to the Lord (Numbers 28:17-25). Since the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., these offerings have not been included in the holiday's festivities.

The key element in the observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the bread itself. Bread eaten during the festival days could not contain any leavening or fermenting ingredient.

Observance of Passover

The time before the feast, the houses had a thorough spring cleaning. Old dishes and cutlery are stored away, and fresh Passover ones take their place. All food that contained any trace of leaven was discarded.

A ceremonial search for leaven is conducted throughout the house. Any leaven found is swept up with a feather into a wooden spoon. All leaven is thrown out and burned.

Observance of Passover

Once the leaven had been removed from the home, it was time to take the chosen Passover lamb to the Temple for sacrifice. In Jesus' day, there could be over 2 million pilgrims in Jerusalem in Jerusalem. The noise of the animals could be heard far away. To deal with the number of people, the priests divided the crowd into groups.

The people killed their animals, and the priest caught the blood in a basin. Other priests were standing in two lines. They would pass the basins down one line and the blood would be thrown on the alter. The other line returned the empty basins.

The priests wore red robes so any spill was not directly noticeable.

Seder

During the Passover order of service, called the Seder, it was obligatory to list and explain the meaning of the three original elements, a custom still observed in modern Seders. The meal had to be finished by midnight and the remains were burned the next day.

To help remember the events of the Passover, the story is retold with the aid of a booklet call the Haggadah.

The original Passover was simple as there were only three elements on the table. Since the Exodus, other elements had been added, each having its own symbolic meaning.

Seder

Wine or Grape Juice

During the Passover ceremony there are four cups of wine each participant drinks. Each cup represents an aspect of God's saving work, as expressed in Exodus 6:2-8:

- (1) "I will bring you out"
- (2) "I will free you"
- (3) "I will redeem you"
- (4) "I will take you as my own".

There is a fifth cup in the ceremony, one that no participant drinks. This cup is called the "cup of iniquity" or the "cup of wrath." The use of this cup likely derives from Jeremiah 25:15-17. This is the cup that Jesus agonizes over in the Garden before His arrest.

Seder Elijah's Cup

Based on Malachi 4:5, Jewish tradition teaches that the Prophet Elijah will come one day and announce the arrival of Messiah. In anticipation of that event, there is an extra place setting and a special cup on the Seder table designated just for Elijah. This cup is identified with God's promise in Exodus 6:8: "I will bring you in unto the land," which is interpreted as referring to Israel's final redemption in the last days.

Seder Parsley

This leafy herb is on the table to remember the hyssop used by the Israelites as a brush to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorpost and lintels of their homes.

Saltwater

Saltwater is used to symbolize the tears of the Jewish people shed while in bondage.

Charoset

This mixture of chopped apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine or grape juice represents the bricks and mortar the Israelites made while they were slaves in Egypt.

Seder

Bitter Herbs

Symbolizing the bitter lives of the children of Israel in Egypt. Strong horseradish is sometimes used and brings tears to the eyes, aiding in the reflection on the bitterness of slavery.

Unleavened Bread

There are three matzo crackers on the Passover Table. They are often placed inside a special pouch containing three compartments. These represent the three Biblical divisions within the people of Israel. The top piece represents the Cohens (priests); the middle the Levites; and the bottom represents the Israelites. The matzos serve as a reminder of the unleavened bread that was eaten as they left Egypt in haste.

Seder

Roasted Shank Bone of a Lamb

According to the Bible, the holiday of Passover was to be observed only in the city of Jerusalem, the site of the Temple, where the Passover lambs were sacrificed. Since the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D., no Passover lambs have been killed and eaten. Instead, the roasted shank bone of a lamb is placed on the table as a memorial of the Passover sacrifice.

Prophecy

Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples. We see several elements from the Seder in Jesus final meal. Jesus took two of the elements of the Seder and applied them to Himself.

When he had given thanks, he broke the unleavened bread, and said, “take, eat; this is my body broken for you: do this in remembrance of me”. The symbolism was clear. Leaven represents “the evil impulse of the heart” or our sin nature. Jesus was saying that His life contained no evil or sin. Yet that life was about to be broken as He bore our sin upon the cross.

Prophecy

The second element was the cup. Jesus applied this cup to the new covenant through His blood. This was the third cup as it was after the meal. In the Seder this cup corresponds to Exodus 6:6, “I will redeem you.” This is the cup of redemption that Jesus said He was about to do through His death. He would shed His Blood to bring redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Just as Passover was a memorial, so is the church’s communion table. “Do this in remembrance of me. For as often as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you show the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor 11:24, 26).

Prophecy

In applying the bread and cup to His own person and ministry, Jesus did far more than just institute a new ordinance to be observed. He stated that the Jewish holidays of Passover and Unleavened Bread pictured or foreshadowed what He, the promised Messiah, would be and do. The three original elements of the Passover tell the story of the redemption found in Jesus Christ.

Prophecy Bitter Herbs

Spiritual slavery is more bitter than physical slavery..

2 Peter 2:18-19

For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

Just as the Israelites were slaves and had to obey their taskmasters,
so we obey our sin nature.

Man is hopelessly in bondage to His sin and has no power to break the chains of bondage. He is in desperate need of redemption!

Prophecy Unleavened Bread

As pointed out earlier, Jesus was free of sin. He did not follow the commands of His flesh, but rather the voice of His Father. That perfect life is offensive to those who are trying to prove their own spiritual worth by their own works. As a result of man's sin, the sinless body of Christ was broken. Remember, that no bones were broken in keeping with the Passover requirements. However, He was beaten beyond recognition and nailed on the cross to die.

Prophecy The Lamb

Jesus was our Passover Lamb. Not just the firstborn is under the curse of death. We all are. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's standards. There is nothing sinful man can do to redeem himself, and everything we do is contaminated by our sin nature.

Man needs a redeemer. Just as the blood of the lamb was placed on the door of the house, Jesus' sacrifice needs to be applied to our lives. This is a personal response and must be done from the heart in faith.

So What ...

Have you applied the blood of Jesus to your own life? Are you under the blood?

If not, you need to accept Him today!

For those who know Him, lets endeavor to see Him more clearly.

Lets worship the Lamb that was slain for our salvation!