



## **“The Passover and the Lord’s Supper”**

**Part I**

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Jesus was observing the Passover with His disciples on the eve of His death. Though they had celebrated the Passover all of their lives, this time was unique. It would be the last time they would gather and observe it with the Lord. The Lord would take the old ceremony that dated back to Moses and inaugurate a *new* feast that would be kept by His disciples until His second coming. This was the obvious time to give them such instructions and explain the new institution, because a) it was the eve of His crucifixion: that which the Passover pointed forward to, and that this new feast would look back upon; and b) the two ceremonial meals are spiritually connected. We can’t fully appreciate the beauty and significance of the Lord’s Supper if we don’t understand the design and the meaning of the ancient Jewish Passover.

**Luke 22:15-16 “Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”**

It had been more than 400 years since God spoke to Abraham, promising to make the Hebrews a great nation and give them a land to conquer and settle, and the last 215 years had been spent in Egypt as slaves. So the Lord’s promise might have seemed unlikely by this point, but God never breaks His own word. He keeps His promises, you can be sure of that. God would make them a great nation and give to them a land, just as He said. But when it must’ve looked like they would never leave the brickfields of Egypt, God raised up a leader: Moses. Moses had spent 40 years in exile and God called him out and commissioned him to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of His people. Moses went, delivered God’s message, and Pharaoh refused. God began sending plagues; ten of them, in fact, over Egypt. Each

plague brought great suffering upon the Egyptians. Still, Pharaoh hardened his heart, dug in his heels and refused to release the people of God.

According to **Exodus 12**, it was the final showdown. God had a plan. This would finally be their moment of deliverance. God told Moses and Aaron one day that they were to instruct the congregation of Israel thus: on a certain day, each man was to select a lamb for his house. It couldn't be just any lamb; it had to be a young male lamb without blemish. They were to obtain and keep that lamb until four days later, in the evening—not in the morning, not at noon, not at midnight—they were to kill the lamb. They were to then take its blood and strike it on the sides and upper part of the doorposts where the lamb would then be eaten. That house would then be marked, you see, by the blood of the slain lamb.

They were then to gather in their houses that night, and each household was to roast and eat the lamb that they had slain. God was very, very particular about this. In fact, if there were not enough people in one house to consume an entire lamb, they were to join with another house. OR if there were too many people in the house for one lamb, they weren't at liberty to go and get a second lamb or bring in six lambs or however many it would take to feed the household. Rather they were instructed that if there were too many people in one house, those extra people were to go and be joined to another household. There was only to be one lamb per house, and that lamb had to be consumed. Whatever might have remained had to be burned. They were to eat with their clothes and their shoes on. God told them to keep their staffs in hand and they were to eat the lamb *in haste*, because something awful yet wonderful was about to take place that night. The Lord would come through the land that night riding on the dark wings of death, and He would reach into every house not marked by the blood of the Passover lamb, and strike the firstborn of the house dead. His power would be on display that night. But the firstborn of the Hebrews, safe in the house marked by the sacred blood, would be spared. God would *pass over* them.

So they followed God's instructions, selecting a lamb on the appointed day. That evening, they killed the lamb and gathered in their houses to consume it. And they waited. Suddenly, the silence of midnight would be shattered by the shrieks and cries of mothers and fathers who found their sons dead. The Bible tells us that save the Hebrews, there was not a house in Egypt that did not have a corpse within it that night (**Exodus 12:30**). Even Pharaoh got up during the night and found his own son cold and still. He called for Moses and Aaron there in the dead of night, and he told them to get their people out of his country. Multitudes of Hebrews fled that night and ran for the Red Sea. I suspect we all remember something about the story, how that God performed a great miracle that night and rolled the waters back, letting His people cross upon the dry seabed.

However, by that time, Pharaoh had had another change of heart and sent his army in pursuit of the Hebrews, to bring them back into captivity. After the Hebrews had gotten over to the delivered side of the Red Sea and the army had entered the dry seabed, God collapsed the walls of water upon the pursuing Egyptians, drowning them.

The Hebrews were finally, finally free. Friend, we cannot overestimate the significance of that moment in their history because this did not only mean that they were no longer slaves; it did not only mean that Egypt was no longer their home; it did not only mean that now they could go to the land of Canaan. It also meant that a *nation* was born that night. God's promise was now being unfolded and they were officially on their way to '*the land of milk and honey*' that God had promised them 400 years earlier. They were to never forget that night. It would forever be the monumental moment in the history and religious practice of the nation. God even changed their calendar to make that month mark the

beginning of their sacred year. Typically, their year began in the fall of the year, at harvest time, and that continued to mark the beginning of their civil year. But from that time forward, the springtime, the month of Abib began the first year of their religious calendar. It was that significant to God and in their religious life. God instructed them that every year at that very same time, they would relive that night.

**Exodus 12:14** “So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.”  
**Exodus 12:24-28** “And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.”

All of this not only pointed backward to their deliverance as a nation, but it also pointed forward to their deliverance as sinners. God said that throughout their generations as the Jews, they were to remember the Passover. (By the way, if you were to study the use of the word *forever* in the Old Testament, you will find that it doesn't necessarily mean *eternally* or *as long as time shall last*, but it means *throughout that dispensation of time*. In other words, however long that particular thing is appointed to be observed, then they *forever* (*during that period of time*) will observe it.)

So, all down through those centuries and generations, they would not only every year look back and remember how their fathers had been freed from the cruel hand of Pharaoh and had crossed the Red Sea and how God had *passed over* them when He smote the Egyptians, but in observing that feast they would also be looking forward to not merely their deliverance as a nation back then, but to their deliverance as sinners at the cross.

Nearly 1,500 years after the actual events of the Passover, you recall that John the immerser would see Jesus walking towards him as he was baptizing down at the Jordan one day, and he said this:

**John 1:29** “...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

The apostle Paul would say this:

**I Corinthians 5:7** “...For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

The Passover pointed forward to Jesus. He is the fulfillment of the Passover. I want to pause here and say that I have noticed a trend among churches in recent years to have “Passover Celebrations.” To go back, relive and observe the Passover feast given to the Jews, to try to reconstruct that. That's a strange practice, since the Bible teaches that Jesus is OUR Passover. The Lord Jesus already gave us who are members of His church, a feast to commemorate OUR Passover deliverance from sin: The Lord's Supper. And it is far superior to that which predated it. We should eagerly embrace and look forward to the Lord's Supper instead of trying to go back to that which was before and merely pointed forward to that which is now to us a reality in Christ Jesus.

When the Jewish Jesus gathered with His Jewish disciples in Jerusalem the night before He was crucified, He desired to eat that Passover with them because it was at that time when He would inaugurate a new feast that would be the fulfillment of the Passover they had observed as a nation for centuries. This was to be the new institution to be observed in His church until He comes again.

**Luke 22:15-20 “And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”**

The three synoptic gospels all include accounts of the sacred moment when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, and they all show that He did so as they ate the Passover (**Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22**). I would encourage you over the next week to read all three of those accounts, as they will help us to better understand this series of studies.

The apostle Paul also later reconstructs the scene by inspiration when he wrote to the Corinthian church in **I Corinthians 11**. Jesus was doubtlessly using the occasion before His death to give them a pattern for how they were to remember Him who was now to be their Passover lamb, saving them and us who have obeyed the gospel, from death and destruction.

The Lord’s Supper is not the Passover and the Passover was not the Lord’s Supper. But one prefigured the other. One was a type of the other, which is the antitype. One was the shadow of the other, which is the reality. Jesus uses one to transition His disciples from the old observance to the new. So, though they are two different ordinances from two different dispensations of time, they are intricately linked. Not only did the Passover look back upon the Hebrew’s flight from Egypt, but it also symbolically looked forward to Calvary. Both feasts in effect symbolized the same event. Thus, we can learn some important things about the Lord’s Supper from the Old Testament institution called the Passover.

One of the lessons I want to point out to you in today’s study is that both were perpetual feasts. The Jews were to observe the Passover in the first month of the year, throughout their generations. That was so very sacred and important that if a Jew refused to do so, he was cut off from Israel.

**Numbers 9:13 “...and forbearth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people...”**

It was not something that they merely did on the night of their flight from Egypt; it was not something they did for the next year or a few years following, but all throughout the generations of the Jewish people of that nation, they were to observe this sacred feast.

The Lord’s Supper is an ordinance given to the church by the Lord Jesus, to be kept by the faithful until Jesus comes again.

**I Corinthians 11:23-26 “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had**

**given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."**

Just as the Jews observed the Passover throughout their generations until Jesus came the first time, so we are to observe the Lord's Supper in commemoration of our Passover and our deliverance from spiritual death until Jesus comes the second time. The communion is not a first century relic; it is a central part of the worship and life of the Church of Christ even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I'll say that again: it is a central part of the worship and life of the Church of Christ even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will be kept by churches that are faithful to God until the Lord returns.

Not only that, but the Hebrews were given an exact time to observe the Passover. They didn't cook up a Passover meal whenever the mood struck them or when some special occasion rolled around. They didn't decide to observe the Passover on a birthday. They didn't observe it on some sacred occasion in their religious life or otherwise. God appointed a time for them to observe the Passover. He said that they were to keep it in the first month of their sacred calendar.

**Numbers 28:16 "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD."**

They were to kill the Passover lamb on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Abib—not the 15<sup>th</sup>, not the 13<sup>th</sup>, but on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of their religious calendar. Not only that, but they were to do so EVERY 14<sup>th</sup> day of Abib; that is, every time that day came, it was to be kept sacred and God's instructions were to be kept. Every year had a first month and a 14<sup>th</sup> day, so when that day came, that was the day to observe the Passover.

Well, look again at some passages pertaining to the observance of the Lord's Supper.

**I Corinthians 11:26 "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."**

**Acts 2:42 "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."**

How did they continue in it? *Stedfastly. Regularly.* When did they gather to do this? We know that they did it *regularly* or *often*, but when? Luke records it, speaking of Paul's meeting with the church at Troas. In fact, Paul waited there for an entire week in order to be with them on the Lord's Day.

**Acts 20:7 "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..."**

*When the disciples came together to break bread...* You see, the first day of the week held to them, and holds to us, a special significance because it is the day the Lord rose again (**Matthew 28:1**). It's also the day upon which the church was established, Pentecost always falling on a Sunday. And it was the day *when the disciples came together to break bread*. In other words, the very purpose of their gathering together was to observe the supper that Jesus had instituted on the evening of His death and told them

to perpetually keep in His kingdom. Bible scholars are widely agreed that the practice of the early Christians was to come together every first day of the week and commune.

The month of Abib holds no special significance to the Gentile Christian, but the first day of the week certainly does hold meaning for every believer. So we are to come together on the first day of the week and commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: our Passover, our deliverer from sin, our sacrifice, by partaking of the Lord's Supper. Is that what you will do on this Lord's Day? The Lord's Supper is not incidental or occasional and it is certainly not optional. It is commanded of every baptized believer in Christ Jesus.

In our next study, we will notice the pattern that God gave for the Passover, learning some important lessons about the Lord's Supper.

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