

Lesson one, The Old Testament Passover.

I. The Passover in the Old Testament.

When we speak of the Passover; the first thing we need to realize is that it is a strictly Jewish event. The Bible clearly forbids those not of Jewish heritage from participating in the feast. We find this truth in Exodus:

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. Ex 12:43 (NKJV)

A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. Ex 12:45 (NKJV)

Now, there was a provision made for the slave and those that did want to participate to be circumcised and accepted into the covenant people, then they could participate, but not until then. So as we move through the rest of this lesson, there will be some things we simply do not understand and I will not be able to fully explain because we have our western society's bias and simply do not understand fully what it meant to be a member of the ancient Jewish people. Let's move into the body of the lesson now.

1. The reason for the Passover.

A. It was in response to the final plague on Egypt

The Passover took place at the end of the series of plagues on Egypt. The first place we need to look is in Exodus chapter 11.

And the LORD said to Moses, "I will bring yet one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. Ex 11:1 (NKJV)

Then Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; ⁵ and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. ⁶ Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again. ⁷ But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.' Ex 11:4-7 (NKJV)

This final plague on Egypt was the most severe of them all. In fact we read in chapter 12:

And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. Ex 12:29-30 (NKJV)

There was not a household in Egypt that was not affected. But as with the majority of the plagues, God spared the Hebrews from this judgment. With the other plagues that affected the Egyptians and not the Hebrews, the people needed to do nothing. It was God's grace alone that protected them from the plague. Here, something was required of them, that something was sacrifice and faith.

B. It was to signify a new start for the new nation of Israel.

We read in Exodus chapter 12:

Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ² "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Ex 12:1-2 (NKJV)

When Israel (Jacob) and his sons came to live in Egypt it was to escape a severe famine in the land of Canaan. While they were there, God fulfilled the promise made to Abraham years earlier, that He would bless his descendants and make a great nation of them. We read in Exodus 1:

Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵ All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already). ⁶ And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. ⁷ But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. Ex 1:1-7 (NKJV)

They came as guests, but ultimately, as all nations do, Egypt went through a power shift and the Bible records:

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. Ex 1:8 (NKJV)

In the future, we will be having a series on the Exodus and all of this will be covered, but it is important to set the stage. This king was threatened by the prosperity of the Hebrews and set out to ensure that his foot was firmly on the neck of these people. In the beginning, it was not for the fact that he thought that the Egyptians were superior, but that he feared them. We read on in Exodus 1:

And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; ¹⁰ come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. ¹³ So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. ¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage--in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor. Ex 1:9-14 (NKJV)

So to make a long story short, Israel spent some 430 years as foreigners and strangers in Egypt (Ex 12:40) and after a series of divine plagues, God miraculously led them out of captivity. I have heard it said and in my studies and I have seen this pattern, "It was easier for God to get Israel out of Egypt than it was to get Egypt out of the hearts of Israel. Once again, this is a topic that I will expound more on in the study of the Exodus.

So in summary of point one, the Passover was instituted to protect Israel from the final plague on Egypt and to signify the start of a new nation and a new year.

2. The procedure for the sacrifice.

As we move into point two, we need to stop and realize something. Exactly what is a sacrifice? Webster's dictionary has as one definition:

"the destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else"

The imagery in the Old Testament is predominately divided into two groups, types and antitypes. The best definition of these two terms is as follows:

"A type is a divinely ordained correspondence between a person, event, or institution and its antitype or fulfillment."

This sacrifice in the Passover was the epitome of the definition from Webster's dictionary. The lamb was destroyed so the people could be saved. Let's get right into it and look at this sacrifice.

A. Why a lamb?

We read in the text of Exodus:

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. Ex 12:3 (NKJV)

On down in the text, verse 5 to be exact, we read also :

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Ex 12:5 (NKJV)

So as we read the rest of the text, keep in mind that the sacrifice could be either a lamb or a goat, but hereafter I will only refer to a lamb.

Now there are some absolutes of this sacrifice, I want to briefly mention them.

1. the lamb must be without blemish
2. the lamb must be a yearling or literally of the first year
3. the lamb is not to be eaten raw or boiled
4. it is to be eaten whole, entrails and all
5. none of its bones are to be broken
6. It is to be completely eaten and any leftovers are to be burned the next day

Now that we have this foundation, let's look at the sacrifice.

B. The process of the sacrifice.

1. The first step was to get the lamb for the sacrifice:

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Ex 12:3-4 (NKJV)

We will see down in verse six that it is to be kept until the fourteenth day, but why is that? This is one of the mysteries of the Bible that we really do not have any answers to. The best conclusion that I can come to is this; the lamb was to be kept close to the family for two reasons.

1. The lamb was to be kept close to the family because the family would identify with the lamb as part of the family making the sacrifice meaningful instead of just a random animal to be slaughtered.

2. The lamb would be kept for a total of four days so that it could closely be examined to make sure it had no defects.

2. The lamb had to be a defect free sacrifice about a year old.

We mentioned this earlier, but it needs to be repeated:

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Ex 12:5 (NKJV)

Now the question must be raised, why could the lamb not have any type of defect? We learn later in the book of Leviticus that the sacrifices that were to be brought were to be inspected by the priests and if they did not meet the requirements they were to be rejected. But still, the question remains, why?

I believe that this issue goes all the way back to Cain and Abel. Let's look at the text of their experience:

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. Gen 4:3-5 (NKJV)

I have always wondered "what was the biggest difference in the sacrifice of the two?" Why was one accepted and the other rejected? I feel that the reason the one was rejected is in the text above. It says that Abel brought one of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. The text also mentioned the "fat", that signifies the best that he had to bring. Later in Leviticus, the fat is used to describe the portion that was reserved for God and God alone. Cain on the other hand brought a bunch of vegetables. I'm sure he brought what he thought was an acceptable sacrifice, but it is not what God had required. That was the difference in the two.

Now for the matter of it being a yearling, for the Israelites, after they left Egypt, the firstborn of all humans and animals were reserved for God's own purpose. Later this requirement of the firstborn humans was replaced by the Levites but the firstborn of the animals still belonged to God.

3. The lamb was to be killed on the 14th day at twilight.

Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. Ex 12:6 (NKJV)

We discussed earlier about keeping it until the 14th day, but here is another thing we do not understand. What is twilight?

To understand this, we must first look at the Jewish day. The word in Hebrew that is closest to our day is the word Yom and it simply means a period of time. The best example of this concept is found in the account of creation when the phrase "the evening and morning was the ___ day". By this we understand that the Jewish day started at sundown. But still, what does the word twilight mean?

The phrase twilight occurs several times in the Old Testament: Ex 12:6, 16:12, 29:39&41, 38:8, Num 9:3, 5, & 11, and 28:4-8. Some say that it means late afternoon right before sunset. The Talmud, the writings of the Jewish religion, akin to our Bible, define the word twilight as the time when the sun sets and before you see the first evening star.

From this, the sacrifice was killed, most likely by cutting the throat of the lamb and letting it bleed to death. Now I will say this sounds barbaric, but keep in mind, this probably was not much out of the ordinary for the Hebrews, I'm sure they slaughtered their own animals for food; after all there were no grocery stores.

4. The blood was to be collected.

We are going to skip down in the text a little bit. Let's look next at v21:

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. ²² And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. ²³ For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass

over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. Ex 12:21-23 (NKJV)

The hyssop was a common ordinary desert bush. God said to kill the lamb and collect the blood in the basin. This has two possibilities of meaning. It could mean a bowl, or it could mean in the place where your feet have worn indentions in the entrance way, we just are not sure, but the idea is that the blood was collected.

The blood would then be applied to the doorposts and lintel. This we will discuss shortly.

There are two more topics I want to cover with the Old Testament institution of the Passover, so let's move right into them.

3. The importance of the blood.

The bible teaches us several things about blood.

1. Life is in the blood. Lev 17:14
2. The Covenant between God and Israel was sealed by blood. Heb 9:18-22
3. Without blood there is no forgiveness. Heb 9:22

The concept of blood requirements to seal the covenant to some may seem grotesque, but to a Holy God, it is the only acceptable payment. To understand this concept, we must first look once again back at the Garden. We know the story; mankind sinned and fell from their standing with God. They made a feeble attempt to cover their sins, but it failed miserably, tree leaves will never cover anything. The same goes for us today, we sin and mess up and then we try to fix it ourselves and usually make a bigger mess of things. This is where God acted in grace toward humanity. Let's look in Genesis once again:

Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. Gen 3:21 (NKJV)

The concept of an innocent dying to pay the sin penalty for another is one as old as the Garden itself. Simply put, man sinned against a Holy God and blood was required from an innocent animal to cover the penalty of sin.

Flash forward to Noah, what was the first recorded thing Noah did when he got off the ark? He built an altar and made a sacrifice to God.

On down through the Patriarchs, sacrifices were made to God and all this culminated in the Mosaic Law and the system of sacrifice for the Tabernacle and later the Temple. One thing you must remember, all the sacrifices of animals required all of the blood to be drained out of the sacrifice and some of it was to be

poured out on the altar, some of it was to be sprinkled on the “horns” of the altar and some of it was to be taken into the Most Holy Place and poured out on the Mercy Seat to make an atonement on the Day of Atonement. So you can see how blood was very important to the system of sacrifice.

But let’s get back into looking at the Passover.

The book of Exodus records:

And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Ex 12:7 (NKJV)

Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. Ex 12:13 (NKJV)

For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. Ex 12:23 (NKJV)

The father of the family was to kill the lamb, collect the blood and then the most bizarre action was to take a piece of hyssop and “paint” the door posts and lintel of the door with the blood. The Hebrew text of verse seven implies that the entire facing of the door was to be covered.

Now the importance of the blood covering the door frame is simple. At midnight, the angel of death would pass through and strike down the firstborn of the Egyptians. The Hebrews instructed by God through Moses covered their door facings to signify that they were part of the covenant community and that they were protected from this death.

There is so much more that I would like to cover concerning the importance of the blood, but I want to keep it contextualized to the passage that we are looking at. In section two, we are going to look more in depth about the importance of the blood.

4. The importance of the meal.

The final thing I want to look at in this section is the importance of the meal.

A. The menu

This was not a simple weeknight leftover meal, this meal was full of imagery and as I believe, if God took the time to state exactly how it was

to be carried out from start to finish, there is an important aspect of keeping it as it is.

Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹ Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire--its head with its legs and its entrails. ¹⁰ You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. Ex 12:8-10 (NKJV)

1. Preparing the lamb

The lamb was to be drained of its blood, as we discussed previously, then it was to be roasted by fire. The text seems to imply that the lamb was to be turned on a spit over the fire which is the fastest way of cooking it. The lamb was to be consumed in its entirety, as the text states including the head and entrails. What was left over, the next morning it was to be burned with fire, because it was a holy sacrifice and the meal was what later became known as a fellowship meal with God. Simply put, the sacrifice was to be made; the priests would take what was required by God, and then give the rest back to the giver so they could eat it with their family. The returned sacrifice symbolized that God was eating with them.

One more thing about how the lamb was to be prepared, let's look in verse 46:

In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. Ex 12:46 (NKJV)

The cooked lamb was not to be removed from the house but most importantly, none of its bones were to be broken.

2. The unleavened bread.

The unleavened bread is what we would consider pita bread, bread made without yeast. After the Passover feast, there was what is known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Jews were to remove any trace of leaven or yeast from their houses and this week was to be a holy week of reflection. (Leaven or yeast more often than not in the Bible is a symbol of sin. It works under the surface and even a little affects the whole lump of dough.) For time sake, we will not be discussing the Feast of Unleavened bread. The importance is that this was the fastest way of preparing bread; using leaven would require the baker to wait until the leaven fermented and made the dough rise.

3. The bitter herbs.

The bitter herbs were meant to be a reminder of the suffering and mistreatment that they had suffered under the oppression of the Egyptians.

Doing research, the modern institution of the Passover meal has the participants taking sprigs of fresh parsley and dipping it in extremely salty water, the parsley being the bitter herb and the salty water representing the tears their ancestors cried while in Egypt. Later they would dip that same herb in a mixture of apples, honey, and nuts that would represent the mortar that they used for the bricks while slaves in Egypt.

One final thing I want to look at before we move to section two is the manner of which they were to eat the meal.

B. The dress code

And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD'S Passover. Ex 12:11 (NKJV)

There are three things I briefly want to mention here concerning how the people were to dress for this meal.

1. They were to have a belt on their waist.

In ancient times, the men did not wear pants like we do today. Everyone, man and woman, wore a tunic, or a robe if you will. I don't know if any of you guys have wore a dress, but I'm sure those floor length dresses would be hard to move in much less run in, yikes! The fact that the text states "*with a belt*" is not something meant to lose its meaning. Over and over in the Bible we are told to "*gird up our loins*" (something we will look at in greater detail later) and typically we have no real idea what that means. Simply put, the man is to reach through his legs, pull his "skirt" tail through and tuck it into his belt. This would allow the man to be able to perform hard work, travel, or even to run if necessary. That is the imagery that the writer is giving here.

2. They were to have their shoes on their feet.

A custom in houses of people of oriental descent is to remove your shoes before entering the house. This is a symbol of respect and cleanliness. Here, it seems that God is flying this command in the face of that simple tradition. Once again, the simple truth of this command is for the people to be ready for when the call to leave comes. They will not have to take the time to put their shoes on; they will be ready to walk out the door.

3. They were to have their staff in their hand.

Once again, our culture loses the symbolism here, but the head of the family carried a staff with the family tree inscribed on it and it was passed from generation to generation. This staff was to lead the way for the family to follow. God is telling the Elder of the family to have it ready so they can move out as soon as the call is made.

This concludes the brief overview of the Passover as it is recorded in Exodus 12. I know there was much more detail I could have gone into, but this gives an idea of the importance of this celebration to the Jews. Some final verses I want to share before we move on are these:

*And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.
²⁵ 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. ²⁶ And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' ²⁷ 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. Ex 12:24-27 (NKJV)*

Lesson two, the Passover in the New Testament

As I began the previous lesson, I feel it is necessary to remind the hearers that the celebration of the Passover is a Jewish celebration and that the traditions and rituals surrounding it are strictly Jewish and we as western Christians simply do not understand all of the aspects of the rites.

Keeping that thought in mind, I also feel it is necessary to make mention of the “type” and “antitype” imagery in the Passover. (Type is the foreshadowing of things to come and the antitype is the fulfillment of the type.) Nearly every aspect of the Passover has its antitype in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. This second lesson will follow the same pattern as the first, but it will show how Jesus was the “antitype” of the imagery shown in the Passover celebration.

II. The Passover in the New Testament.

1. The “modern” religious rite of the Passover.

As with all of the Jewish festivals and celebrations, they were instituted when worship and sacrifice was carried out at the Tabernacle and later were transitioned to the Temple at Jerusalem. With that thought in mind, the law required all Jewish males to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. The feasts were the Feast of the Tabernacles or Ingathering, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and the Feast of Passover combined with the Feast of unleavened bread.

The New Testament is not silent concerning this Feast of the Passover. We find in the Gospel of Luke where Mary and Joseph made sure Jesus was taken to Jerusalem to experience the Passover:

*His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.
42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according
to the custom of the feast. Luke 2:41-42 (NKJV)*

Jesus being fully God, I’m sure understood the importance of the passer, but what strikes me is that His parents made sure Jesus experienced it.

We will see later that Jesus took His disciples to Jerusalem for the Passover as well. Maybe He was retelling of His experiences there at Passover, maybe telling them about Moses in Egypt, but none the less, they went:

*Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to
Jerusalem. John 2:13 (NKJV)*

We know the rest of this account; Jesus saw the merchants in the temple area and drove them out. What I want you to realize is that the Passover was a BIG part of Jesus life while He was on this earth.

The Passover now some 1400 years after its inception in Egypt was just as important. Allow me to interject the Passover now some 2000+ years after Jesus was on this earth is still just as important. I mentioned the types and antitypes. The first one I want to point out is the type of the Passover itself.

A. The Passover as a type of salvation.

If you remember back to the first lesson, I mentioned that the Passover had two main purposes. One was in response to the final plague on Egypt. The Second was to signify a new start for the nation of Israel. WE are going to look at the antitype of these two points.

1. Salvation is in response to the plague of sin.

The apostle Paul puts sin in the most basic of terms when he penned these famous words:

For the wages of sin is death Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

The wages of sin is death. Even the most elementary of Sunday schoolers learn this verse. I remember when I was a kid learning this verse long before I had any clue as to what it meant. Today I realize that this verse is true on so many levels.

Once again, we need to look back at the garden and the fall of man to gain an insight here:

When the serpent tempted Eve, he twisted the word of God given to Adam to make it fit his agenda to make it more appealing to Eve:

but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. Gen 3:3-4 (NKJV)

You will not surely die said the serpent. If you would allow me a little speculation here, I'm pretty sure that when Adam told Eve this command from God, Adam made it sound as horrible as he could. Maybe he even over emphasized the fact of death. Regardless, Eve did not like what she heard. I can imagine her walking by this tree, looking, wondering. Young people, you

know for yourselves, and parents admit it that you know it is true, the more your parents harp on a subject, the more you are threatened about a subject, the more you want to do it. When the serpent popped up and told Eve what she wanted to hear, that is all she needed, she willingly took the bait. I don't believe that an immediate physical death was what was intended in the translation. Here is what I believe; When God told Adam in the day you eat, you will die, God was meaning a spiritual death. The closeness that Adam and God experienced was lost, his innocence was gone, and things would never be the same. Remember when God came Adam tried to hide and cover himself. Physical death followed. Physical death is the hunter that all try to elude, but to no avail. The Apostle Paul wrote this concerning Adam's sin:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-- Romans 5:12 (NKJV)

Because Adam sinned, we are all under the penalty of his son because the same human nature that made Adam and Eve fall is in all of us.

Something had to be done concerning this plague of sin. Mankind is wicked. One of the prophets said that the heart of man is continually set upon evil. The price had to be paid for this, just as the lamb was slaughtered and the blood painted the door frame, there had to be a sacrifice to completely pay our sin debt. The following points to this lesson will strive to explain the payment for sin.

2. Salvation signifies a new start.

The Apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians this core truth for Christianity:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor 5:17 (NKJV)

When we come to a salvation experience with the living Christ, we are given a new lease on life. As Paul states in the verse the old has gone and the new has come. Christ gives you not only a new life, but a new mind and heart as well.

I believe Warren Wiersbe sums it up the best when he wrote:

“Passover marked a new beginning for the Jews and bound them together as a nation. When the Lord liberates you from bondage, it’s the dawning of a new day and the beginning of a new life.”

This new life found in a true salvation experience through Jesus allows us that fresh start. A passage from the Old Testament book of Micah states:

Who *is* a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy. ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:18-19 (NKJV)

This new start is only through the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. In the next section, I want us to look at the importance of Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

2. Jesus as the Passover lamb.

Once again, I must refer to the first lesson where we referenced Genesis and the account of Abraham and Isaac where Isaac asks his father, “Here is the wood and fire, but where is the lamb?” (paraphrased in my own words) There was a stipulation made for the Day of Atonement when the High priest would take the blood of the sacrifice behind the curtain and sprinkle the Mercy Seat to be a barrier between God and the law, but this sacrifice was only good for a year at a time. The writer of Hebrews (Hebrews being arguably the best commentary on the Old Testament) states that this offering could never completely take away the sins of the people. Through the centuries men and women of God asked in their hearts like Isaac, “where is the lamb?”

I want, once again to take our outline from the first lesson and use it here as well concerning the importance of the Lamb.

1. A lamb was required for the sacrifice.

Flash forward about 1400 years after the first Passover. A man by the name of John, by all external appearances an Essene, was preaching a message of repentance to prepare the people for the coming of the long promised Messiah, when suddenly he looked up and shouted these words for all to hear:

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"
John 1:29 (NKJV)*

What a thrill that must have been for this preacher of righteousness to stand and look his Savior in the eye and proclaim, "Here is the One we have been looking for, Here is the One that was promised, HE is here!!!"

The apostle Paul proclaimed this:

*For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.
1 Cor 5:7 (NKJV)*

Moving forward it is imperative that we realize that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

2. The sacrifice had to be perfect.

I will admit that a lot of times when the word "perfect" is used in scripture, the meaning "free from sin" is not the intended meaning, instead the idea is mature or complete. When God through Moses told the people to get a lamb without spot or blemish that was the closest thing to our meaning or perfect we can envision. The lamb or any other sacrifice for that matter could have no defects what so ever. The same goes for our antitype of this lamb, the Lamb of God. We read in 1 Peter:

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. 1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

To redeem a sinful human race back to a Holy righteous God, a perfect, completely sinless person had to become the sacrifice. The apostle Paul in the book of Romans ruled all humanity out when he wrote, there is no one righteous, not even one. So enter God's plan to redeem humanity, it centered on sending His perfect, holy Son to a sinful world to become sin to make a way for sinful man to return to God. We read in 2 Corinthians:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor 5:21 (NKJV)

Through the perfect sacrifice of Christ, we have this way to be right before a Holy God.

3. The sacrifice must be closely examined.

This section goes hand in hand with the previous one in that the sacrifice was examined and tried to ensure it was a perfect sacrifice.

Jesus during His earthly ministry was scrutinized and criticized beyond what would make most of us say forget it, it's not worth it. Opposing Jesus were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and everyone else that had even a twinge of religion. Why was that? It was because Jesus had a radical concept that many of His day did not want to hear, and it is true even today, many don't want to hear Jesus most simple message. What was that message? Simply, I believe, it was to leave the empty traditions of man behind and follow two simple rules:

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Matt 22:37-39 (NKJV)

These passages sums up the entire Mosaic law, Love God, and love your neighbor. What a concept.

For three years Jesus was examined and tried and ultimately the evening before Passover, at the time of the evening sacrifice, Jesus was offered as the sacrifice for our sins, perfectly and forever. Once again the writer of Hebrews states it plainly:

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Heb 9:11-14 (NKJV)

Jesus is our tested, tried, and perfect Passover Lamb.

3. The importance of His blood.

Many denominations today downplay the significance of the blood of Christ. They remove any reference to the blood from sermons and songs. Even Dramas and movies and the like show Jesus with a trickle of blood from a thorn in the forehead. History tells us that crucifixion was a

grotesque form of capital punishment where the person was hung from a tree, nailed or tied depending on the crime, and left there to asphyxiate to death.

Jesus was sentenced to that death as a rebel. The Jews threw in the accusation of blasphemy for good measure and ensured the most horrible death.

Typically the accused was taken out and then nailed or tied to the cross, but Jesus was flogged first. Pilate thought this would appease the bloodlust of the Jews. One thing we need to note, the Jews did have a similar punishment where the victim was beaten with 39 lashes of this flagrum, a whip of leather thongs with pieces of metal, glass or bone in the end of the thongs, but the Roman implement of this punishment was meant to literally beat the victim within an inch of their life. That was the flogging, or scourging that Jesus received. Skin cut open, muscles ripped; we cannot even imagine the pain this would have caused. Then the soldiers mocked him, and forced a crown of thorns on His head. These thorns are believed to be approximately 2-3 inches long and it was not gently placed it was forced. When Jesus was returned to Pilate, He was a quivering mess of blood and flesh, it is no wonder Isaiah the prophet was given these words:

Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; Isaiah 52:14 (NKJV)

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5 (NKJV)

This beaten, battered form was then marched under the weight of the patibulum, which most likely weighed about 150 pounds, where he was finally nailed to the cross. As we learn from the scriptures, He was beaten so severely that he could not bear the patibulum the entire way, so a man by the name of Simon was pressed in to the service of the Roman soldiers to carry it for him. Imagine the feeling of this man, a stranger in the crowd, forced to carry this log and perhaps feeling the trickle of Jesus blood running onto him.

Medical science tells us that the most likely cause of Jesus death was hypovolemic shock, in other words, he bleed to death.

That being said, the songs and messages that state that even one drop of Jesus blood would have been enough to save us, I'm sorry to say, is, I believe, totally missing the point. Jesus had to shed all of his blood,

especially in the light of the sacrifice having to shed all of its blood before the priest could offer it.

Now what makes the blood of Christ so important? It is through the power of the blood of Christ that we are saved:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace Eph 1:7 (NKJV)

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:13-14 (NKJV)

and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Col 1:20 (NKJV)

how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Heb 9:14 (NKJV)

The blood of Christ is the atoning sacrifice required by the law for the sins of mankind.

4. The importance of the meal (the Lord's Supper).

The final thing I want us to look at is the Lord's Supper. We read in the gospels where Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples the night before His crucifixion. Jesus institutes what is known as the Lord's supper. I want us to look at this passage:

And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." ⁹ So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" ¹⁰ And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. ¹¹ Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' ¹² Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." ¹³ So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁴ When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. ¹⁵ Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the

kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
²⁰ Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. Luke 22:8-20 (NKJV)

This observance has lost its significance through the years and has even been used by some to try to say that Christianity promotes cannibalism.

Do not be mistaken, this rite is as sacred and holy as the Passover was for the Hebrews. This was the first "command" Jesus made to the church. We get caught up in the juice (or wine) and the wafers (or crackers) and lose sight of its meaning. Through this symbolic act, the disciples and all who will later partake, identify with Jesus in his suffering and death.

The Apostle Paul later expounds on this in his letter to the Corinthians:

and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. ²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 1 Cor 11:24-30 (NKJV)

Paul is explaining the importance of this. He even goes as far as saying that those who partake unworthy are subject to the judgment of God.

I have to ask this question, do we live our lives in a way that is honoring our covenant with God through this sacrifice of our Passover Lamb? Something to really think about.

There are so many more things that I would like to expound on, but I know there is not enough time in what we have, but I sincerely hope this has been a help in understanding the importance of Passover for Christians and as always if you have any question that I did not answer, feel free to ask me.

Keith Blackwell 2010