



biblestudy

Passover

Beginning of God's Plan of Salvation

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Introduction

For many the Bible is a book of mystery. Some, however, finding it quite readable, use it as a guide to living, while still others believe the Bible can be used by conniving individuals to justify almost anything. Most who study it admit the Bible contains wisdom, but many believe the book is of no more importance than certain other religious books. Some think you should only concentrate on the New Testament, believing the rest is outdated or has become irrelevant. Others believe the entire book is inspired and should be studied as a whole. When it comes to the Bible, one thing IS certain...there is much confusion when it comes to the study of the Bible—the best selling book of all time.

The purpose of the following study is to prove the Bible is a masterpiece of continuity that is...from beginning to end...completely congruent. It actually makes sense! In fact, one of the most powerful proofs of the Bible's continuity is that several different human hands wrote it over a span of thousands of years, yet it fits together perfectly, offering up to its readers a consistency of doctrine that is remarkable. As you read through this study, you will be able to see for yourself the Bible is a book that is both inspired and undeviating in its message.

The following study takes you through the Bible, and explores the topic of the Passover observance. Throughout this study, questions are posed to help you consider important points. Please refer to your Bible, looking up the verses as you read along. The passages used in this study are taken

primarily from the New King James Bible version. If you are using another version, that is fine, but please read the marginal notes in case there are any minor differences.

The Passover

The Passover is considered by many to be an antiquated Old Testament story. Others who are aware that it is a modern-day festival often think it only refers to a modern Jewish holiday celebrating the release of the ancient Israelite people from Egyptian slavery. Although threads of truth are interwoven in this understanding, the Passover really has a much broader and more important meaning...it is the beginning of God's plan of salvation for all humanity.

Passover Pictured Christ's Sacrifice

Let's go back to the Old Testament, to a very familiar story to learn how the Passover relates to us today. We begin our study in the book of Genesis at a time when the ancient patriarch Jacob took his family to Egypt to escape a severe famine. At the invitation of his son, Joseph (Genesis 46:2-7), Jacob's family journeyed to Egypt and continued to live among the Egyptians for many generations. Even after Joseph's death, the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied abundantly, filling the land with their children (Exodus 1:6-7). In time, a King arose who did not know Joseph...one who was displeased at the ever-increasing population of Israelites. The Pharaoh of Egypt determined to resolve the "Israelite problem" by forcing the children of Israel into hard bondage (Exodus 1:8-22). After many

years of servitude under harsh taskmasters, God led Moses to deliver his people out of slavery. Ten plagues were visited upon the Egyptians in order to force the Pharaoh to release them. Throughout nine of the plagues, the Pharaoh wavered. It was the tenth and final plague that proved too much for the Egyptians to bear.

The tenth and last plague brought death to all of Egypt's firstborn; while the Israelites, and those who followed their example, were spared the death sentence. God instructed Moses to tell the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and smear the dead animal's blood on the doorposts of their homes. Following the sacrifice, that very evening, the Death Angel of God passed through the land of Egypt, and the firstborn of Egypt died.

Question:

1. Did the Lamb's blood have a particular prophetic meaning? (Matthew 26:27-28)

God protected the Israelites from physical death through a symbolic act – the smearing of blood from a dead lamb over the doorposts of their homes. This was symbolic of the future death of Christ, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29). Christ ultimately fulfilled the Passover and shed his blood to make possible the spiritual salvation of mankind. By instituting the Passover, God revealed to Israel the first of His seven annual festivals, which He commanded were to be observed forever.

The Death of Jesus – A New Testament Memorial

The Passover was a commanded observance from God. It was a yearly reminder of His deliverance of the Israelite's firstborn from death while they were held captive in Egypt. Today, Christians are commanded by God to observe the Passover.

Questions:

1. Why was Christ sent to all humanity? (John 3:16-17) Did Christ die for all mankind, or simply a select few? (Romans 3:23, 29)

2. Is Christ's role in mankind's salvation connected to the Passover? (1 Corinthians 5:7)

3. Did the New Testament Church celebrate the Passover? (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

The New Testament Passover, with its symbols of unleavened bread and wine, is our yearly reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God) delivering us from the penalty of eternal death while we were held captive by sin (John 1:29). "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Bible clearly indicates that the death of Jesus is the first step in God's fantastic plan of salvation for all mankind. He will eventually give every human who ever lived the opportunity to enter into everlasting life and be born into His divine family. The Passover is the beginning of God's master plan and clearly pictures this event. Jesus commanded His disciples to observe the Passover every year using the new symbols. In observing the Passover, we should always

remember His great sacrifice for us and how great is the Love of God. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Church Jesus built, named, and preserved continues to understand the vital truth that the New Testament Passover is the annual memorial of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The Church of God has, through its history, recognized that the Passover pictures our being reconciled to God through a Savior who rescued us from the penalty of our past sins. But this world, in general, does not understand the real meaning of Christ's sacrifice. Instead, Christianity celebrates Easter, thinking to celebrate the resurrection of Christ; yet nowhere in the Bible does God instruct this practice.

Passover Lamb Prophetic of Christ's Sacrifice

The Old Testament Passover was a commemoration of the first Passover God instituted. The Passover provided deliverance of the Israelites' firstborn from the plague of death. The firstborn of Israel were spared by a lamb's blood painted on their doorpost. Today we can be protected from the penalty of eternal death our sins have earned us, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;" (Romans 3:23-25).

Through the blood of Christ, "our Passover" lamb was "sacrificed for us" (1Corinthians 5:7). The Old Testament Passover was a shadow of things to come – a physical manifestation pointing to the prophetic "Lamb of God," giving His perfect, unspotted, and sinless life as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for our transgressions of God's law.

As the Old Testament Passover saved Israel's firstborn, it also looked forward to the time when a Savior for all humanity would come to shed His blood, paying the death penalty for all human sin. Paying this penalty in full made it possible for the remission of our sins upon our repentance and baptism.

Jesus Kept the Passover

A Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ. As a disciple, we are to follow Jesus. "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). This not only means to follow His commands but also His example.

Questions:

1. *Did Christ keep the Passover in His youth? (Luke 2:41-42)*
2. *On what other occasions did Christ keep the Passover? (Mathew 26:17-21)*

During Jesus' youth, His parents taught Him to keep the Passover: "Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover and when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast" (Luke 2:41-42). At the age of twelve, Jesus not only kept

the Passover but also lingered for another three days, and "all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers" (Luke 2:47).

Very soon after Jesus began His ministry, He went up to Jerusalem to keep the feast of the Passover (John 2:23). Jesus even observed the Passover with His disciples on the night before He was crucified: "Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" The Bible tells us that He went on to eat the Passover with His disciples (Matthew 26:17-21; Luke 22:13-15). Why did Jesus keep the Passover? The simple truth is that Jesus was the Lord of the Old Testament and He commanded that it be kept. Jesus Christ came to set an example for us.

Christ Institutes Ordinance of Humility

Jesus "riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." (John 13:4-5). What an example! It was so astonishing that Simon Peter initially refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Why did this bother Peter so much?

In ancient times, open-toed sandals were the customary shoes people wore. Their feet could become very dirty. It was considered a menial task to wash the feet of a person coming into the home. Usually it was a slave or a lowly servant who had to serve in this capacity. Peter, who

already recognized Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 16:16), never dreamed that his Master would or should wash his feet. He did not yet understand the purpose of the ceremony Jesus was instituting. Jesus explained to Peter that if He did not wash his feet, "you have no part with Me" (John 13:6-8). This is an important concept to understand! If Peter did not allow Jesus to wash his feet, he would not be a Christian!

By washing the disciples' feet, Jesus was illustrating the principle that He came to earth to serve mankind. "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). By His example and actions, He proved His ultimate service by giving His very life for the sins of mankind! (John 3:16-17). Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). Jesus commanded His disciples to follow His example and instituted foot-washing in connection with the New Testament Passover as a symbol of service.

The New Symbols

Questions:

1. God commanded Israel to eat the Passover lamb. It was a symbol of the prophesied death of Jesus Christ. On the eve of fulfilling that prophecy, what symbols did Christ institute that demonstrated the spiritual significance of His death?

(Luke 22:19-20)

2. What kind of bread was used in the Old Testament observance of the Passover? (Exodus 12:8).

3. What is leaven a symbol of? (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

4. Was Christ without sin? (Hebrew 4:15)

While Jesus was teaching in Capernaum, He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and Drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53-54). What did Jesus mean by this? The Pharisees did not understand. Christ's own disciples believed this to be a hard saying and did not understand (John 6:60). Jesus would reveal at the Passover, just before His crucifixion, the full impact of eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

As they were eating the Passover meal, Jesus took some bread, blessed it and broke the bread into pieces. He then handed it out to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Matthew 26:26; Luke 22:19). This symbol of the new way the Passover would be kept was instituted. The bread symbolized Jesus Christ's body, the Lamb of God. In the Old Testament, Israel physically ate the Passover lamb. In the New Testament the Lamb of God is to be eaten, although symbolically, through the bread.

There is more symbolism that is not readily apparent. In the Old Testament the bread that God commanded Israel to eat on the Passover was unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). The bread Christ used in the New Testament was also unleavened bread. The unleavened bread was

symbolic of Christ's life, which was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Also, leaven is symbolic of sin (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

The unleavened bread also symbolized Christ's broken body: "He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them" (Luke 22:19). Jesus died a terrible death. He was horribly beaten and His body was pierced. The pieces of broken bread represent the broken body of Jesus. He told us to eat the bread that was given for us. Broken bread, symbolizing the true bread from heaven, is given freely to all who desire life.

After the bread, Jesus took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you (Luke 22:20). Jesus now used wine to symbolize His blood that He was going to shed for all humanity. Remember, Jesus stated we must "drink His blood" to have life in Him. The Bible is very clear we are not to drink real blood. So this is not a literal statement like some believe. The wine that Jesus is talking about does not miraculously turn into His blood. Jesus is using the "fruit of the vine" as a symbol of His blood.

In the Old Testament Israel was to eat a lamb and paint the blood over the doorpost so the "death angel" would pass over. In the New Testament the unleavened bread and the wine still represent the flesh and the blood of the "Lamb of God." The Old Testament symbols pointed to the Christ to come. The New Testament shows us the Christ who shed His blood and gave His broken body so all may have life in Him.

Questions:

1. *Christ was cruelly beaten. What purpose did his beating have? (I Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5)*

2. *In taking the bread that represents his body, what spiritual promise are we claiming? (same verses)*

3. *What was the importance of Christ's shed blood? (Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 26:28)*

Jesus knew before He was crucified that He was going to suffer an agonizing death. He prayed three times, "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). He knew that in a little while He was going to be beaten and have to go through excruciating pain.

Scourging was a common punishment used by the Romans. Bent over, tied to a post, and stripped to the waist, the victim was beaten with a multi-lashed whip composed of leather thongs. The end of the leather thongs was weighted down with broken shards of bone and sharp jagged pieces of metal. The Romans would beat their victim just short of death. Jesus suffered this type of scourging. His flesh was torn open and bleeding. "His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14). He was not allowed to recover and was immediately told to carry His own cross. He was so weakened that after a short distance another had to help carry His cross (Luke 23:26).

After Jesus was brought to Golgotha, they

crucified Him. His hands and His feet were nailed to the cross. Not only was this very painful but it normally took several days for the victim to die. The victim's weight would constantly be pulling at the stakes increasing the misery. Although pain, sunstroke, heat exhaustion and loss of blood were typical, the victim usually died of suffocation.

Why Christ Had to Die

The wages of sin is death. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, the penalty had to be paid. God is spirit and cannot die. It was necessary for the Word to become human and to die to pay the penalty for all mankind (John 1:1-14). "Without the shedding of blood (there) is no remission" for sin (Hebrews 9:22).

The Word, the second member of the God family, willingly gave up His glory to be begotten and born as a mortal human. Since the Word created all things, His life was worth more than all human life that ever existed (Titus 2:13-14). By shedding His blood, Jesus Christ became the perfect and complete sacrifice for all sins ever committed by mankind. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22).

Why did Jesus voluntarily suffer all these terrible things and die a horrible death for the entire world? Jesus was "wounded for our transgressions and was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins! This includes our breaking of both spiritual laws and physical laws. Christ

paid the penalty for broken physical laws – transgressions of God's physical laws. He suffered a broken body so by faith we may be healed when we are sick. During the Passover, when the unleavened bread is broken, it serves as a symbol of His broken flesh, and reminds us: "by (His) stripes (we are) healed" (I Peter 2:24). Also, Jesus suffered the shedding of His blood so we may be forgiven for breaking God's spiritual laws (I John 1:7).

Passover and the New Testament Church

Questions:

1. *When is the Passover to be observed? (Exodus 12:6-8)*
2. *How is the Passover to be kept today? (I Corinthians 11:17-28)*

After Jesus changed the symbols of the Passover to unleavened bread and wine, and commanded His disciples to remember His death and suffering, the New Testament church continued to keep the Passover. Some translations of the Bible render pascha as Easter, but this is incorrect. Pascha, which modern translations have corrected, is called Passover. The Apostle Paul taught the Gentile churches to keep the Passover (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

History also shows that the New Testament church continued keeping the Passover. Eusebius, an early church historian, wrote: "While Anicetus was at the head of the church of Rome [about A.D. 154], Irenaeus relates that Polycarp... had a conference with Anicetus on a question concerning the day of the Pascal feast [Passover] ... but Polycarp also was not only instructed by

apostles, and acquainted with many that had seen Christ, but was also appointed by apostles in Asia bishop of the church of Smyrna ... He also was in Rome in the time of Anicetus and caused many to turn away from the ...heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received from the apostles this one and only system of truth" (Ecclesiastical History, book IV, chapter 14, in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1).

Jesus changed the symbols and instituted the foot-washing ceremony but never changed the Passover to another system of worship. Jesus commanded his disciples to keep the Passover in memory of Him until He returns to usher in His "Father's Kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).

Many professing Christians believe they can partake of the bread and wine any time they choose. The Apostle Paul wrote, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). This sounds like you can choose how often to take the Passover. If that were true, you could take Passover every hour and throw faith out the window...why would you need faith? What about growing in grace and knowledge? The fact is that Jesus, as the Word, instituted the Passover on the 14th of Abib, after the 13th had ended at sunset (Exodus 12:6). Jesus kept the Passover correctly and commanded His disciples to continue as they were taught. The Passover was commanded to be an annual memorial and reflects why Christ suffered and had to die. Memorials are kept annually. This memorial is not to be kept as often as we choose,

but as often as Jesus commanded, which is once a year, at the appointed time.

Taking the Passover In a Worthy Manner

The Apostle Paul gives a warning not to take the Passover in an unworthy manner (I Corinthians 11:27). What did he mean by this? "Unworthy" does not describe the person, but describes the manner or attitude in which a person eats and drinks the symbols. It is true that no one is worthy of Christ's sacrifice. However, Christians are commanded to observe the memorial of our Savior's death every year.

Many of the Corinthian brethren were taking the Passover lightly. They were treating the Passover as just a normal meal. Some were getting drunk, and some were being left out. The Apostle Paul had to correct them and instructed them to "let a man examine himself." We are to examine ourselves (properly discerning Christ's sacrifice) "and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (I Corinthians 11:28).

Christians should examine themselves prior to the Passover. The symbols need to be taken thoughtfully and with renewed faith. The reality of what these symbols truly represent should be considered! We need to fully appreciate why we need the Passover and reflect on why Jesus Christ willingly died for us and became our savior.

The Festivals of God

The Passover is not an ancient Jewish festival. It didn't stop with the death of Jesus Christ. Far from it! The Passover is kept in remembrance of

what Jesus did for us. Without his blood being shed and his body broken, we would not have a Savior. If we don't eat His flesh and drink His blood, pictured by the New Testament symbols, we do not have any part in Him. The reality is even more profound when the true understanding of the Passover is realized. The Passover is only the beginning of God's wonderful plan of salvation. Leviticus 23 reveals all the annual festivals which God gave to picture the entire plan of salvation for all mankind.

God's annual festivals and Holy Days reveal to us tremendous spiritual truths. They reveal God's step-by-step plan of salvation, the need for a savior, what sin is, the penalty for sin, how to overcome sin, and the ultimate purpose of mankind. Each annual festival portrays a great event in God's awesome plan for the salvation of mankind.

Questions:

1. Who is the god of this present world? (II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2)

2. Why don't people understand the truth about God's plan of salvation? (Revelation 12:9)

The vast majority of people do not understand God's plan of salvation. The "god of this world," Satan the devil, has deceived mankind into believing these festivals are done away—relics of the past or at the very least only Jewish days of worship. Without these Holy Days, mankind cannot truly understand the way to salvation. Without the understanding of what sin is or the penalty for sin, salvation becomes a hollow concept. Consequently,

mankind does not really know why a Savior is necessary. The meaning of repentance has been replaced by penance; and God's way of life is a complete mystery, including the knowledge of who and what God is.

Just as the weekly Sabbath keeps a man in a right (justified) relationship with God, so the annual festivals and Holy Days (annual Sabbaths) keep the Church in a right knowledge of His plan of salvation. Anyone refusing to keep holy the days God revealed and made holy is not in a right relationship with God, and simply cannot understand the true way to salvation. These truths are pictured in God's annual festivals and Holy Days. Although the Passover is not a Holy Day, this annual festival is the beginning of these festivals. Those who faithfully observe these commanded annual observances of the Lord are continually reminded, year-to-year, of these spiritual truths and His plan of salvation. Ω

NOTES:
