

Meaning Of The Passover Past, Present, And Future

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The most important ceremony observed by ancient Israel was the Passover ceremony and the attending Festival of Unleavened Bread, because the Passover was a yearly reminder to the Israelites of their release from slavery in Egypt; moreover, today the Passover is the most important ceremony observed by the elect of God, because it is a yearly reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for each individual's sins. Passover today also pictures the beginning of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. After the return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, the Passover will be an important event that will eventually be observed by all of humanity. But, why was the Passover so important to Israel, and why is it still important to those who truly follow God, today, and why will it be important to humanity after Christ's return?

The observance of the Passover season has provoked many questions over the centuries among those who seriously study the Bible. However, for those who realize that this day illustrates the beginning of God's plan for humanity as pictured in the annual festivals, the above questions are very important and worthy of answers. In this age of lawlessness and religious debauchery, the true meaning and significance of the Passover has been virtually lost. In this study paper we will attempt to show the awesome meaning of the Passover—past, present, and future.

Editor's Note: When studying the Passover observance, it is important to understand that this observance teaches God's plan for the salvation of humanity through a progression of events and symbolic rituals. As we analyze the Passover ceremony as it has been observed throughout the ages, we will see the literal, prophetic, and symbolic meanings of its sacrifices and rituals and how they were fulfilled, discarded, modified, and/or replaced with new ones. It is particularly important to be aware of this process of progressive teachings in order to understand the last Passover that Christ observed and the rituals and symbolism that Christ instituted for his followers to observe on subsequent Passovers. A good understanding of the ceremony, rituals, and events of both the Exodus and subsequent Passovers in ancient Israel is extremely important in order to understand the events that surrounded the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

THE FIRST PASSOVER CEREMONY

It is necessary to understand that the historical events surrounding the first Passover are not given in chronological order in the Book of Exodus; therefore, their order of presentation here has been rearranged for the purpose of story flow. At the end of Exodus 10, the ninth plague is ending and Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron to permit the Israelites to leave Egypt. This conversation between Moses and Pharaoh continues into the 11th chapter with some information inserted about events that occurred after this meeting and before the first Passover.

Exodus 10:24-29 Paraphrased

"And Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, Go, serve the Lord. Only leave your flocks and herds behind. Your little ones may go with you" (v24).

Pharaoh offers to let the people go, but he will not allow them to take their livestock with them. However, Moses demands that Pharaoh release the animals as well as the people:

"And Moses said, You must also give into our hands sacrifices and burnt offerings, so that we may prepare them for the Lord our God. And also our livestock shall go with us. Not a hoof shall be left. For we shall take from them to serve the Lord our God. And we do not know with what we shall serve the Lord until we arrive there" (vs.25-26).

After Moses makes his demand to Pharaoh, the event that follows sets the stage for the last plague along with the preparation and completion of the first Passover ceremony:

"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he was not willing to send them away. And Pharaoh said to him, Go away from me. Be careful for yourself. Do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die. And Moses said, You have spoken rightly. I will not see your face again" (vs.27-29).

It is important to visualize what transpires during this last meeting between Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh. The ruler of one of the world's greatest nations is being challenged by two men for whom he has no respect. In addition they claim to be representatives of a God he does not believe in, and they come in this God's name demanding that he release the Israelite slaves who are a major source of his nation's wealth.

Exodus 11:4-8 concludes the conversation between Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh, which began in chapter 10, verse 24: "And Moses said, This says the Lord, About midnight I [God] will go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, even to the first-born of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, that has never happened before nor shall it ever happen again. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that you [Pharaoh] may know how that the Lord does put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these your servants [Pharaoh's servants] shall come down to me [Moses], and bow down themselves to me, saying, Get out, and all the people that follow you: and after that I will go out. And Moses went out from Pharaoh in a great anger" (Ex.11:4-8 Para.). See Ex.3:21-22; 11:1-3.

The First-Born

Notice that only the first-born of Egypt were to be killed by the death angel, and all the Israelites were to be spared: "And you shall say to Pharaoh, This says the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: And I say to you, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if you refuse to let him go, behold I will kill your son, even your first-born" (Ex.4:22-23 KJV).

In ancient times, a first-born child had a special place in the family, and the highest honor and privilege among the children went to the first-born son. The symbolism of the first-born was transferred literally to national Israel as God adopted them as his children. Those who are called to participate in the first resurrection before Christ's return are also called sons because they are the first-born of the Father's New Creation. See Heb.12:23-24; Rom.11:7-25.

THE SELECTION OF THE LAMB

"And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak you to all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house" (Ex.12:1-3 KJV).

There are two important things to remember from the above scriptures:

1. God sets this month as the first month of his sacred year.
2. On the tenth day of this first month each head-of-household is to select a lamb for the Passover sacrifice.

As we will see, this tenth day is also very important to the events surrounding the Passover before the crucifixion of Jesus.

THE KILLING OF THE LAMB

"And it shall be for you to keep until the fourteenth day of this month. And all of the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the evenings" (Ex.12:6 Para.).

There are two facts to take note of at this point:

1. The lamb is selected for death on the tenth day of the first month and killed on the fourteenth day prior to sunset, which is the beginning of the fifteenth day.
2. The Passover is a ceremony which spans a time period that includes the end of one day and the beginning of another.

Numerical Meanings

Hebrew is a language in which each letter has a numerical value. The Bible is constructed in an intricate mathematical pattern wherein every word, sentence, phrase, and concept, pertaining to any given subject is linked together with a specific numerical value or mathematical equation unique to itself. Everything that God does and has caused to be written has meaning, and so it is with the dates that he chose for the Passover. The dates surrounding the Passover were not only chosen because of their seasonal meaning, they were also chosen because of their numerical meaning.

•The number 1 denotes 'primacy and unity'. God has chosen the first month of his sacred year to begin the first ceremonies, rituals, and festivals that picture the process of salvation for humanity.

The Passover ceremony begins this process with the selection and sacrifice of the lamb, which symbolizes the supreme sacrifice for the protection from death. This first month shows the primacy and unity between the supreme sacrifice (the lamb) and the festival days in that, the lamb is eaten at the very beginning of the first day of the festival of Unleavened Bread, which pictures the maintenance of a sinless condition that is only made possible by the supreme sacrifice.

•The number 10 represents the 'divine perfection' of order as seen in the law of God. It is on the tenth day of the first month that the Passover Lamb is selected. The connection between the number 10 and the Lamb is undeniable and points toward a future fulfillment wherein the Creator God, who is the Law giver, will become the sacrificial Lamb of God. •The number 14 has to do with 'spiritual perfection'. The lamb is killed on the fourteenth day, which represents the righteousness and sinless perfection of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God (Jn.1:29-36). •The number 15 is a complex number, which is the product of 3 x 5. The number 3 is symbolic of being 'complete and entire'. The number 5 is symbolic of 'grace' or 'favor'. In this number we see the perfection of grace shown to the Israelites as God protected them from death through the sacrificial blood of the lamb. This number also points to the future protection from eternal death through the sacrificial blood of Christ. •There are four days from the point when the lamb was selected until it was sacrificed. The number 4 indicates creation. On the fourth day after the selection of the lamb, a new nation was created and set apart from Egypt by the death of the lamb and the placing of its blood upon the door posts. The number 4 also points toward the time when the sacrifice of Christ will open the way for the Father's new spiritual creation and nation (Heb. 12:23; 1.Pet.2:9). •On the fifth day after the selection of the lamb, the lamb's blood was applied to the door posts and the people accepted the protection that it symbolized. The number 5 indicates grace or favor. Here we see God's favor shown toward the Israelites in protecting them from the destroyer through the blood of the lamb.

The first Passover's prophetic symbolism pointed toward the perfect sacrifice of the Creator and Savior of humanity, and the day that he would give his life in order that humanity would have a way to escape eternal death.

THE BLOOD AND THE DOOR

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it" (Ex.12:7 KJV).

They were to kill the lamb before sundown at the end of the 14th day, put the blood on the sides and top of the door frame, and wait for the death angel to pass through Egypt. All the Israelites who went through this door into the house came under the protection of God. If they remained there until morning, they would stay alive (Ex.12:12-13); if not, they would die because the whole nation of Israel is considered the firstborn of God (Ex.4:22).

Jesus, the Blood and the Door

Jesus eventually fulfilled the symbolism of the blood and the door. It is through the Father's invitation (Jn.6:44,65) and the sacrificial blood of Christ (Heb.10:22) that we may enter God's protection from eternal death and have everlasting life in his kingdom (Acts 4:12). However, once we decide to enter God's protection, we become a first-born (1.Cor.15:20-23) and if we decide to leave (Lk.9:62) this protection we come under the penalty of the second death from which there is no return.

"Jesus said to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find good pasture" (Jn.10:7-9 KJV).

THE EATING OF THE LAMB

"And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance [innards] thereof" (Ex.12:8-9 KJV).

The lamb was not to be butchered in the normal manner, but was to be left whole after the blood had been drained from it. See 2.Chron.35:11-14. There were a number of literal, symbolic, and prophetic reasons for the manner in which the Israelites were to roast and eat the lamb:

- Fire is symbolic of purity and purification, and all sacrificial offerings of flesh were to be made with fire.
- The bitter herbs are symbolic of the slavery and bondage of Egypt.
- The unleavened bread is symbolic of purity and sinlessness, and since the Passover meal was on the first day of the festival of Unleavened Bread, no leavening, which represents sin, could be present with the lamb, which represents purity, sinlessness, and a release from the bondage of sin (Egypt represented the bondage of sin).
- Besides being literal food that sustained the Israelites' physical lives, the lamb was also symbolic of the body of the prophetic Savior who would come and give his perfect and sinless life as a sacrifice for humanity. All who are worthy to eat of the symbolic body of the Lamb of God will be granted eternal life as a spirit being. See Jn.6:30-58.

Break No Bones

"It shall be eaten in one house. You shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house. And you shall not break any of its bones" (Ex.12:46 Para.). See also Num.9:12.

There are two important things to note in verse 46:

1. The lamb must be eaten within the house that had the lamb's blood placed upon its doorposts.

They were not allowed to take the lamb out of the house and share it with others, because the lamb was only sacrificed for those of that particular house—it was their personal sacrifice. It would have no beneficial effect on those for whom it was not sacrificed.

2. Since the lamb is symbolic of Jesus Christ, none of its bones were to be broken. See Psa.34:20; Jn.19:31-36.

THE REMAINS OF THE LAMB

"And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire" (Ex.12:10 KJV).

Why did the sacrificial lamb's remains have to be burnt with fire? Once the sacrifice had been made, its protective blood had been used for its purpose, and its body had been eaten, it could never be used for this purpose again. The burning of the lamb's remains shows that once salvation is accepted, there is no turning back. Once the Israelites sacrificed the lamb and accepted the salvation offered through it, the sacrifice could never be done again. As the record shows, when the Israelites left Egypt, they could not return. They had been saved from physical death and slavery, and to return would mean their death. This meaning of the burning of the lamb's remains is transferred to those who are called to salvation during the gospel age of salvation. Once the sacrificial blood of Christ is accepted and applied to the forgiveness of sin, the deed is done and it can never be performed again:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb.6:4-6 KJV).

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb.10:26-27 KJV). See also Lk.9:62.

It Is The Lord's Passover

"And thus you shall eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover" (Ex.12:11 KJV).

The Hebrew verb 'pasakh', which is 'Passover' in English, basically means to skip over something. The absolute infinitive form of the verb 'pasakh' means to protect as well as to pass over. The concept of protection is included in the meaning of 'pasakh'. Therefore, 'to Passover' has the meaning of skipping over as well as protecting.

Israel to be Passed Over

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute my judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex.12:12-13 KJV).

The Blood of Atonement

Although God considered the Israelites his first-born, they were not in right-standing with him. While in Egypt, they had lost sight of God and his laws; therefore, they were in need of being reconciled to him in order for him to place them under his protection. Without the shedding of blood, there can be no atonement for sin. Unless a life is sacrificed to pay the penalty for violating the law, sin cannot be set aside or forgiven:

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (Lev.17:11 KJV).

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb.9:22 KJV).

From the Genesis record it is obvious that Cain and Abel had been instructed how to be put back in right-standing with God through the sacrificial system. Cain was unwilling to diligently follow God's instructions so he was a sinner before God. However, Abel was willing to obey God; therefore, he was righteous in God's eyes. As it says in Genesis 4:7, Cain would have been smiling if he had given the proper sacrifice. We know Abel offered the proper sacrifice (Heb.11:4) because he was put back into right-standing with God. Why was Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's? In Genesis 4:4, Abel offered a firstborn of his flock. Abel knew that someday Christ would come to earth and offer himself as a perfect sacrifice, and through Christ he could have his sins taken away and forgotten. Abel offered the proper sacrifice, which was symbolic of Christ's sacrifice; therefore; his sins were set aside and he was put back in right-standing with God. Prior to Christ's sacrifice, when a person violated God's law, their fellowship with God was interrupted and their access to him was barred. In order to deal with this situation, God designed the sacrificial system. By offering the proper sacrifice, the breach that was caused by the violation of the law was repaired and fellowship was restored. When the Israelites offered the sacrifice that God required, their sins were hidden from God's sight and they were placed in right-standing with him. When the Israelites killed and ate the lamb in Egypt, they obeyed God in offering the proper sacrifice. The lamb's blood upon the door posts was evidence to God of their obedience. Therefore, God was bound by his word to place them under his protection and spare their lives. This same literal and symbolic meaning is carried forth to the new agreement in the blood of Christ.

Stay in The House Until Morning

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin: and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" (Ex.12:21-22 KJV).

In the last half of verse 22, God commands the Israelites to stay in the house until morning. The reason for this command is that the only protection they had from the destroyer was the lamb's blood, which indicated to the destroyer that those within that particular house were under God's protection. If anyone—man, woman or child—ventured out from under the protective symbol of the lamb's blood, they would be killed by the destroyer. If only the first-born of Egypt were to be killed, why were the Israelites who were not first-born forbidden to go out of their houses? The reason is that all Israelites at that time were considered by God to be his first-born. This same symbolical meaning of Israelites being the first-born of God also applies to those called to participate in the first resurrection. If any of the first-born of the New Creation venture out from under the protection of the blood of Christ they are subject to losing their life for eternity.

Remember This Day

"And this day shall be to you for 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 ordinance for ever" (Ex.12:14 KJV).

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God: for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night" (Deut.16:1 KJV).

God commanded the Israelites to observe the day they left Egypt as a memorial and a feast day throughout their generations. This command to keep the feast throughout their generations has been passed on to the followers of Christ and to those who will live after his return when the government of God rules the earth. The day the Passover was eaten is to be a memorial and must also be kept as a festival day. The Hebrew word 'hag' (i.e., feast) found in Exodus 12:14, has the connotation of demanding a celebration or festival to be kept.

An Observance Forever

Exodus 12:17 "And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever" (KJV). See also Deut.16:3-8.

Exodus 12:23-28 "For the Lord will pass through to kill the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to kill you. And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when you come into the land which the Lord will give you, according to his promise, you shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say to you, What is the meaning of this service? You shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he killed the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed their heads and worshiped" (Para.).

Exodus 12:42 "It is a night to be much observed to the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations" (Para.).

It is important to note that the Passover meal was not a festive event. There is tremendous difference between what happened during the Passover ceremonial meal (the passing over of the destroyer) and what happened during the daylight portion of the 15th day of the first month (the exodus from Egypt).

The word 'observed' in verse 42 is the Hebrew plural of 'shimmurim', which means 'vigil or watch'. In Jonah 2:8 the verbal root of 'shimmur' means 'paying attention'. The word 'shimmurim' is only used twice in the entire Old Testament and does not refer to observing a feast or celebration of any kind. The problem is that 'shimmurim', which means 'vigil or watch', cannot be translated into the English word 'observance' (i.e., a celebration) without altering the meaning of this verse.

The point is very clear that the Passover ceremony was to be a night that should be kept as a memorial of the momentous events that occurred on that night. And it was to be kept throughout the generations of those who observed the first Passover and throughout the generations that would follow.

For those who would come to understand the writings of the prophets, the Passover was not only a reminder of what had happened, but also a reminder of the prophetic meaning of the Passover and its future fulfillment.

WHO IS ALLOWED TO OBSERVE THE PASSOVER?

"And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof" (Ex.12:43-45 KJV).

A certain class of people were prohibited from participating in the Passover ceremony because of the covenant relationship that God would form with Israel at Mount Sinai:

"All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. And when a stranger shall sojourn with you, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof" (Ex.12:47-48 KJV).

Circumcision was an outward sign that an individual and the nation of Israel were under the terms and conditions of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.17:10-14). The instruction to circumcise all the males given during the events surrounding the first Passover were not only a reminder of the Abrahamic Covenant but also pointed to the future agreement God would make with Israel at Mount Sinai. Since all males under the Abrahamic and Sinai covenants were to be physical and spiritual leaders, circumcision was symbolic of the physical covenant condition and the spiritual covenant condition. Although only males could bear the outward sign of the covenant, both males and females could bear the inward sign through their heart-felt obedience to God:

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your life. . . Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked" (Deut.10:12,16 KJV). See also Jer.4:4.

The circumcision mentioned as being a necessary condition for the observance of the Passover observance under the first agreement with national Israel was prophetic of the spiritual sign between God the Father and the sons of his new creation:

"For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that is outwardly in the flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, and in spirit, and not in the letter, of whom praise is not from men, but from God" (Rom.2:28-29 Para.). See Phil.3:3 and our study paper concerning Paul's teaching on circumcision.

Spiritual circumcision is a prerequisite for participation in the new covenant during the gospel age of salvation and after the return of Jesus Christ to rule the earth. During the Gospel age, only those who have repented, been baptized, and received the holy spirit, are to partake of the Passover.

THE PASSOVER IN THE WILDERNESS

When the Israelites left Egypt the first literal fulfillment of the Passover had been accomplished. After they agreed to the covenant that God offered at Mount Sinai, the Passover was observed differently from the original Passover in Egypt in that, there was a central place (the tabernacle) to offer the sacrificial lamb and a priesthood to present its blood before God; and the Passover's rituals and symbolism pointed toward Christ as the Lamb of God.

Numbers 9:1-12 "And the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, you shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall you keep it" (vs.1-3).

The Passover was to be kept in its season along with all of its rites and ceremonies.

The Alternate Passover

"And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said to him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel? And Moses said to them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you" (vs.6-8).

These men had a valid concern. They knew that they were ceremonially unclean, and that they could not partake of the Passover in this condition. They also knew that they must partake of the Passover or they would be removed from Israel.

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover to the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it to the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it" (vs.9-12).

A very important point to take note of is the aspect of being on a journey when the Passover came. Why would this be a concern? The reason for concern was that the only place where the Passover lamb could be sacrificed was at the tabernacle. See Deut.12:4-7; 16:5-7; Jer.7:12; 2.Chron.6:40-42; 7:1-3. The Passover is so important to God and his covenant relationship with his chosen people that he made a special provision for it to be kept on an alternate day if there is a valid reason for not observing it in the first month of the sacred year.

The Blood Of The Covenant

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord has said we will do" (Ex.24:3 KJV).

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, . . . and built an altar. . . offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings . . . And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it upon the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words" (Ex.24:4-8 KJV).

Notice the blood of the sacrificial animals was sprinkled on the altar (see also Heb.9:19), and then upon the people. After this, the people agreed to do whatever God required of them. With the sprinkling of blood, the covenant was ratified and sealed; the people and the nation of Israel had a formal agreement with God. Because they had been sprinkled with the sacrificial blood and had agreed to obey God, they were under his care and protection, and would remain so, as long as they kept their part of the agreement. The ratification and sealing of the agreement with the blood of a sacrificial animal pointed to the time when an eternal agreement with individuals would be ratified and sealed by the sacrificial blood of the Creator God himself.

The Sin of Neglect

"But the man that is clean, and is not on a journey, and forbears to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Num.9:13 KJV).

Because the Passover was an intrinsic part of the agreement that the Israelites had made with God, neglecting to observe it was an extremely serious breach of this covenant relationship. If this covenant relationship was not renewed annually, a person was no longer entitled to the benefits and protection given under it, and was to be cut off from Israel as a punishment for this neglect.

As we will see, similar conditions are made a part of the Gospel age Passover as instituted by Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

For ancient Israel the Passover was a very important event and, as history shows, it impacted their national existence as well as their daily lives for better or for worse depending on their attention to its observance. Within its rituals, many prophecies concerning the Messiah and his mission for the redemption of humanity are revealed. Below are a few of the prophetic meanings of the Passovers of the past that looked forward to the coming of Christ and beyond:

- As a nation the Israelites were considered the Creator God's first-born sons (Ex.4:22-23).

The elect of God of all ages prior to the return of Christ are God the Father's first-born sons (sons of his new creation) (Heb.12:23).

- The Passover lamb was set apart on the tenth day in preparation for its sacrifice for the salvation of Israel (Ex.12:3).

The Lamb of God was set apart prior to the existence of the earth for his sacrifice for the salvation of humanity (Heb.9:24-28; 1.Pet.1:19-20; Rev.13:8).

- The Passover Lamb's blood on the door frame was a sign of God's protection from physical death (Ex.12:13, 22-23).

It is through the blood of Christ that sin is forgiven and a person is protected from eternal death (Matt.26:28; Acts 4:12; Eph.1:7; Col.1:13-14; 1.Jn.1:7).

Although the celebration of the Passover had great significance to the nation of Israel, its meaning was not limited to the ancient Israelites. Within the symbols and prophetic meaning of this day is found the beginning of God's plan of salvation for all humanity.