

Passover Established - Lord's Supper Awaits

As a result of Pharaoh's arrogance in defying the living God, Egypt, the most powerful nation in the ancient world, was humbled by a series of ten plagues brought upon them by God, the last of which brought death to every firstborn in the land. While Israel endured the first three plagues along with the Egyptians, God sent Moses to inform Pharaoh that Israel would not suffer those that followed in order that all "may know that I am the Lord (Exodus 8:22)," and further avowed, "I will make a difference between My people and your people (Exodus 8:23)."

Israel's escape from the last and most severe of the plagues, the death of the firstborn, was accomplished by a special intervention and was to be memorialized annually. This event, called the Lord's Passover (Exodus 12:11), would be observed for fifteen hundred years and prepared the way for the Lord's Supper in the Christian era. The Passover commemorated the time that God directed that at twilight on the night of the dreadful plague of death, all Israel should slaughter a yearling lamb, the best of the flock, one without blemish. Before it was roasted in fire and eaten, they were to take the lamb's blood and sprinkle it on the doorposts and lintel of each Hebrew house. When God would come that night to call to account the life of every firstborn in the land, He would "pass over" each house that had the lamb's blood sprinkled upon it. The blood would be a sign that the inhabitants of that house were members of God's family and would be protected from His wrath that was moving through the land. For fifteen hundred years, on the same day of the same month, and at the same time of day, Israel would celebrate the "Passover," commemorating that time that God's wrath "passed over" Israel and the act which broke Pharaoh's power that held them in bondage. Israel was freed to go forth under the care and protection that would naturally be accorded to God's children.

The fullness of God's work was not accomplished in either the Passover or the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. Like the great deliverance accomplished through Joseph that preserved the family of Jacob (see Genesis 45:5-7) was a foreshadowing of this greater deliverance now accomplished with the nation of Israel, the "Passover" and "Exodus" were also a foreshadow of a still greater deliverance to come. The ultimate deliverance would be found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the world. As the blood of the unblemished lamb sprinkled on the doorposts shielded Israel from the pending death in the land of Egypt, the blood of the unblemished Lamb of God, sprinkled on the hearts of men at their baptism, covers over the sins that demand death before the righteous judgment of God. As Israel was empowered to make an exodus from Egypt and escape from their bondage to Pharaoh, men are empowered through Christ's sacrifice to escape from their enslavement to Satan.

As Israel annually celebrated the Jewish Passover for fifteen hundred years, Christians have weekly celebrated the "Christian Passover," or Lord's Supper for nearly two thousand years. As Israel was faithful to that celebration, Christians will remain faithful to the New Covenant ideal until

Christ comes again (1Cor. 11:26). As we have noted before, the Bible is by human standards strange history. Lacking often the details that we might expect from the writings of men, we find the Scriptures better understood when seen from the perspective of God. The Apostle Paul writes, "For whatever things were written before [referring to the Old Testament Scriptures] were written for our learning...(Romans 14:4)." All the things experienced and achieved, all accomplishments and failures, all joys and sufferings that have been chronicled in the Scriptures have been recorded because they tell us something about God and His work with creation. The lamb of the Passover prepared the world for the coming of the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed that man might be shielded from God's judgment against man's sin and that he might be able to enter into the protection of His family. As the Apostle John writes, "But as many as receive Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (John 1:12)." In the Old Testament, only the Jews in Egypt were granted by God's grace passage from slavery to freedom, from oppression to protection, and that by their birthright, not by their choice. In the New Covenant, God grants the opportunity to all men, by their own choice, to "pass over" from death to eternal life.

[Read Exodus 14]