

The Importance of Passover

The Passover Feast has been observed annually by the Jewish people for over thirty-four hundred years. This feast is certainly important to them. But why should it be important to Christians?

The Word of God gives us three reasons why believers in Christ should be vitally interested in the Passover Feast of Israel.

1. Christ Is Our Passover.

If we understand the Passover Feast we shall better understand our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, we read that the Apostle Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for not straightening out an immoral situation. In his exhortation, he used this remarkable language:

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

It is clear from the above Scripture that Jesus Christ is so identified with the Passover Feast of Israel that He is called "Christ our Passover." Why should this be one of His titles? The answer is found by going back to the history of the first Passover as recorded in the book of Exodus when the Jewish people were in the land of Egypt.

For four hundred years, ever since the time of Jacob and Joseph, the Hebrews had lived

in Egypt. During those four centuries the Egyptians enslaved the Hebrew people and forced them to build treasure cities. The Jewish people were miserable and destitute and cried out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for deliverance.

God sent a deliverer whose name was Moses. The Lord commissioned Moses to demand of Pharaoh that he release the Hebrew people; but Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord and against the Jewish people and would not let them go. Therefore God sent nine plagues upon the land of Egypt, each one more devastating than the one before. Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

The time came for the tenth and last plague. God told Moses to instruct the people of Israel that every family should take a lamb, sacrifice it and sprinkle the lamb's blood upon the doorposts and the lintel of each house. God said He would send the death angel through Egypt that night, and indicated that "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). This is where we get the term "Passover."

God passed over every home that had the blood sprinkled on the doorway. But in the houses of the Egyptians, where there was no blood and no faith, throughout that first

Passover night there were wailings, cryings and moanings as the parents awoke to discover their firstborn children were dead.

From the house of Pharaoh to the houses of his servants, death took the firstborn throughout all the land of Egypt; but death did not touch the Hebrew homes where the blood had been applied. Thus God redeemed Israel from death unto life.

Fifteen hundred years after that experience in Egypt when Israel was dwelling in the Land, a preacher named John the Baptist stood upon the banks of the Jordan River calling Israel to repentance and exhorting the nation to prepare for the coming King. The day for which John had been born finally came, for on that day he would introduce the Messiah to Israel.

There were many passages from the Hebrew Scriptures that John might have quoted and many types to which he might have alluded. But when he saw Jesus approaching him, John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He was saying to the Hebrew people that Jesus was God's Passover Lamb, the perfect and complete provision for the expiation of their sin.

The Apostle Paul reiterates this truth when



he speaks of the Lord as “Christ our Passover.” For Christ to truly be our Passover, we must, as it were, apply His atoning blood upon the doorposts of our hearts. Then, when the death angel of eternity comes, he will pass over us. We will not perish, but have everlasting life. Christ is our Passover and, as we better understand the Passover Feast, we’ll understand Him and His redemptive work.

2. The Lord’s Supper Is Based on the Passover.

A second reason why we Christians should know and understand the Passover Feast is that it will help us to better understand the Lord’s Supper. It was out of the heart of the Passover Feast that our Lord established the Lord’s Supper, the Communion service.

We read in the Gospels that, on several occasions, wicked men would have taken Christ and killed Him. Yet it says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that “His hour had not yet come” (John 7:30). What was His hour, that is, the hour of His atoning sacrifice?

The hour for His death was on Passover during His thirty-third year. It could not be one day before nor one day after Passover. Thus, it was on His last Passover night that He gathered around the table with His faithful Jewish disciples and said, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15).

He taught His followers the meaning of His sacrificial death out of the heart of the Passover Feast. He gave to them and to us, His Church, this memorial feast of the Lord’s Supper from two central elements in the Passover Feast: the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. If we understand the Passover with all its historical roots, heritage, Biblical background and miraculous events, we shall more fully appreciate the Lord’s Supper as we remember His death until He comes again.

3. The Passover Helps Us Share the Gospel with Jewish People.

There is a third reason why we, as Christians, should be fully acquainted with the Passover Feast, and that is in order to be better witnesses to our Jewish friends.

It is true that many Jewish people with whom you and I come into contact don’t know very much about the Old Testament, or even about Judaism. However, most know something about the Passover. They have observed it in their homes or their parents’ homes or in their synagogues. They know the miraculous story of the deliverance of Israel under Moses out of slavery in Egypt and some of the miraculous events which transpired.

So, if we know something about the Passover and how it is observed today, it will give us a medium of communication with our Jewish friends to point them to the One who is the Lamb of God, their Passover and Messiah.

Thus, we have seen three reasons why we, as Christians, must understand the Passover Feast of Israel: We shall know our Saviour better; we shall more fully understand the Lord’s Supper; and we shall have a more intelligent witness to our Jewish friends.

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