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PASSOVER: THE DEEPER SYMBOLIC MESSAGE

For centuries, the true significance of the Passover picture has been hidden. To our Jewish friends, the Passover memorializes the release of their nation from Egyptian bondage centuries ago. Enlightened Bible study in the last century, however, has uncovered the deeper symbolic message of the Passover.

The lesson begins long before the Passover account in Exodus 12. It even begins before the creation of man. *Before the foundation of the world* our all-wise heavenly Creator knew that the first man Adam, without the benefit of experience, would inevitably sin. With this foreknowledge, God planned for a release from the death penalty for sin. But first, before rescuing him from the grave, God would permit the earth to be populated with Adam's children that they might all have experience with sin and receive the everlasting lessons of disobedience. Then, after the command to *multiply and fill the whole earth* would be accomplished, the lost and dying race would receive benefit of the redemptive price of a perfect man's life in *ransom* for a perfect man's life. Genesis 1:28; Isaiah 35:10

In preparation for this deliverance from the bondage of sin and death, God offered to His Son, the *firstborn of all creation*, the privilege to pay the penalty for sin in Adam's place and to fulfill this redemptive plan. In response to his beloved Father, the *Logos* said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Psalms 40:7, 8; Colossians 1:15) At this point, God's "only begotten Son" was destined to become the *Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*. "...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world..." (1 Peter 1:19, 20) Herein is the entire plan of God—"a ransom for all to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:6

BUT WHY DOES GOD REQUIRE A RANSOM SACRIFICE?

The concept of sacrifice is one that has been termed a *hard saying* by many who have sought to understand the Bible. For example, when Jesus said to the multitude, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life... Many therefore of his disciples... said, 'This is an hard saying; who can hear it?' ...From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (John 6:54-66) Of course, Jesus was not speaking of his literal blood and his literal body. He was stating that his blood must be shed to "take away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) And since all fall under the

one death penalty for sin, all will benefit from the payment for that penalty as they accept (*drink*) of Jesus' merit. 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

The concept of a *ransom* is easily seen in the payment of money for one who has been kidnapped. It might be said that Adam was held captive (kidnapped) by sin when Satan tempted him to disobey God. Adam's life was forfeited at the very instant he sinned, and it would require a ransom payment to offset the consequence of sin—

death. Jesus was to offer his life in sacrifice, but first he must prove perfectly obedient under the most trying of circumstances to offset the perfect life that was lost. The result of that ransom was the promise of a resurrection from death for Adam, and since the entire human race dies because of Adam, the entire race benefits from the promise of a resurrection and an opportunity for life.

THE PASSING OVER OF THE FIRSTBORN

God had a special relationship with the nation of Israel because of the faithfulness of their patriarchs. God promised the fathers of Israel that He would guide their children throughout eternity. Bearing this in mind, the lesson of the Passover is a beautiful example of our heavenly Father's watch-care and guidance of His *chosen people*.

The background of this inspiring lesson is set in a time when the heart of the Pharaoh turned against the children of Israel. God's people cried out for deliverance from the cruel

bondage of their Egyptian taskmasters. God heard these prayers and raised up Moses, the humble yet mighty deliverer of Israel from the yoke of Egyptian bondage. "I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant... I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage..." Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the sons of Israel go out...' (Exodus 6:5-11 NAS)

God sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians as a result of Pharaoh's stubbornness. The final plague was death to the firstborn of anyone throughout the land who would not trust in the blood of the lamb. "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb... without blemish, a male of the first year... And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and... shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses... And they shall eat the



flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs... it is the LORD'S Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt... and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you... And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations..." Exodus 12:3-14

This annual celebration of the Passover held a symbolic message kept for centuries until Messiah would come to the nation of Israel. Examples, illustrations in *type* and *antitype* are used in Scripture to help in understanding difficult concepts. God used these illustrations to act out certain features of His plan so that His people could grasp more clearly what He was trying to teach. Just as on a typewriter, there is an inseparable relationship between the type and what is impressed with the type, so in the Bible, God used a *type* to set forth an image of what would ultimately be fulfilled in the future in the *antitype*.

The Passover *type* is just such an *example* of what would be fulfilled in *Christ our Passover*. (1Corinthians 5:7) It serves as a picture, a prophetic lesson of deliverance not only for the *firstborn*, but also for *all*. The followers of Christ are called the *firstborn*. Because they have accepted Christ's blood on their behalf in this Christian Age, they have received deliverance first, before the general population. The great majority of the world have never accepted Christ and are pictured, after the *Passover*, in the subsequent deliverance of the general population of the Jews from the bondage of the Egyptians. A comparison of the *types* and *antitypes* below will illustrate the relationship between the Passover picture and its Gospel Age fulfillment.

WHY THE BRUTALITY OF THE CROSS?

Not only did Jesus die to provide the ransom price, but the manner in which he died provided more than a ransom from death.

1. Saved from Adamic Sin and the Law

Crucifixion was the horrible method of execution in olden times for the vilest of criminals. When the blinded, envious and murderous chief priests and Pharisees conspired to put Jesus to death, they wanted him portrayed to the public as one *accursed of God*. They desired a public denunciation of the great Teacher who had fearlessly exposed their hypocrisies, and who was fast making an impression upon the common people. For them to have stoned him to death as a blasphemer, they feared, would leave him a martyr. However, to have him publicly executed as a criminal, sentenced by the Sanhedrin and executed by the highest civil power in the world, would, they had hoped, brand Jesus, his teachings and his followers, forever with infamy. We may imagine how their evil hearts exulted, when finally they had coerced Pilate into the execution of Jesus, thus ridding themselves of the light that pointed out their darkness.

By dying in this cruel manner upon the cross, Jesus, though innocent, could suffer the curse of the Law on behalf of the Jews. "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree...*" (Galatians 3:13) Thus, Jesus died the *just for the unjust* and delivered the Jews out from under the additional condemnation of not living up to the requirements of the Law Covenant that God had given them.

2. A Willing Sacrifice

Jesus demonstrated perfect obedience to his heavenly Father, regardless of personal cost, as he prayed in the Garden, *not as I will, but as thou wilt*. (Matthew 26:29) His patient endurance through the painful beatings and crucifixion proved his loyalty to his heavenly Father in the fullest degree. And thus, he proved his worthiness of the high exaltation, which the Father had prepared as his reward—the Divine nature. To be entrusted with so high a dignity, honor and responsibility, Jesus would have to prove faithful unto death. And,

"CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US" 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8

"Now these things happened to them [the Nation of Israel] as an example [illustration], and they were written for our [Christ's followers] instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages [Jewish Age & Gospel Age] have come." (1Corinthians 10:11 NAS)

Note how the various features of the Passover *type* to the Jews are fulfilled in *antitype* to the Christian.

THE PASSOVER PICTURE	THE GOSPEL AGE REALITY
Exodus 12, Passover Celebration	Christ our Passover, 1 Cor. 11:24, 26
Ex 12:11, Passover Feast	Lord's Supper—Memorial of his death, 1 Cor. 5:7, Luke 22:15-20
Ex. 12:3-6, Passover Lamb	Jesus, the Lamb of God, 1Pet. 1:19; John 1:29; 1Cor 5:7
Ex. 12:3, Lamb chosen for each household on the 10 th day of Nisan	Jesus presents himself as a King on the 10 th of Nisan, Matt. 21:5; John 12:1, 12, 13
Ex. 12:5, Lamb to be without blemish	Jesus unblemished by sin, 1Pet. 1:19, 2:22; Heb. 7:26; 1John 3:5
Ex. 12:6, Lamb killed on the 14 th day of Nisan	Jesus killed on 14 th day of Nisan, Mark 14:12 & 15:15-38
Ex. 12:46, None of the lamb's bones to be broken	Jesus spared broken bones in crucifixion, John 19:31-36
Ex. 12:12, 13, Firstborn only of each family liable to the plague of death	Church of the Firstborn, Heb. 12:22-28 & Rom. 8:29, 23 only these liable to second death in Gospel Age, Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29
Ex. 12:7, Slain lamb's blood sprinkled on doorposts and lintels spares firstborn from death plague	We are saved by faith in Jesus' blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of our hearts, Heb. 10:22, Rom. 5:1-10
Ex. 12:8, 9, Lamb roasted with fire was eaten with bitter herbs and none left over until morning	Christians' bitter and fiery trials to consume the dross of their characters, Heb. 13:10-13, Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 1:7; 2Tim. 2:12
Ex. 12:8, Only unleavened bread eaten	"Unleavened bread of sincerity & truth," 1Cor. 5:7, 8; John 6:48-51
Ex. 12:12, Passed over in the night	Night time of the Gospel Age, Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 4:4-6
Ex. 13:3, Delivered from bondage in Egypt	Saved from bondage of sin & death through Christ, Gal. 4:3-5
Numbers 33:3, Deliverance in the morning	Morning of the Millennial Age, Isa. 21:12, Psa. 46:4,5; Psa. 30:5
Ex. 14:26-29, Deliverance from Pharaoh, the taskmaster	Deliverance from Satan, the taskmaster, Rev. 20:1-3

indeed, Jesus *“made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...”* Philippians 2:6-11

Thus, Jesus demonstrated to God, men and angels his absolutely loyal will. *“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.”* (John 10:17-18) Jesus did not take back that human life sacrificed at Calvary. He exchanged it for the forfeited life of father Adam and his entire family.

3. Sympathetic High Priest

Isaiah 53:3-5 provides a prophetic picture of the suffering of Jesus, stating that the promised Messiah was to be well acquainted with the grief and sorrow of the world. *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows acquainted with grief... Surely he has borne our grief, and carried our sorrows... He was wounded for our transgressions... and with his stripes we are healed.”* Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus is a sympathetic high priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. *“Therefore, he had to be made like his brethren in all things, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest..., to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since he himself was tempted in that which he has suffered, he is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”* Hebrews 2:17-18 NAS

Jesus continually permitted himself to be drained of vitality through contact with sinful man. Every time Jesus healed, it was at the expense of his own strength. We read that *“virtue [strength] went out from him”* as he healed the sick of mind and body. (Mark 5:30) Therefore, Christ *“...can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”* (Hebrews 5:2) Because Jesus assumed upon his shoulders the ills of this world, he can have compassion on the poor groaning creation. (Romans 8:22) Those whom he has ransomed, he will know how to rehabilitate and restore when they are raised to life in his Kingdom. He will be an able teacher and mediator as they learn righteousness and grow to perfection. (Isaiah 26:9; 1 Timothy 2:5) Without his guidance, they would fall back into death as a result of sin.

4. Sharing in Christ's Suffering and Death

Christ our Passover represented his sacrifice by both bread and wine, as symbols of his flesh and his blood, which were meant to commemorate his sufferings and death. Although Jesus' share in the sin-offering was finished over nineteen hundred years ago, there is another feature of God's plan that is not yet finished—the completion of the Church, which Jesus called his body. As the Apostle Paul stated: *“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do*

my share on behalf of his body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.” (Colossians 1:24 NAS) It is this body, his little flock, that he offered to share in his cup of suffering.

Soon the last member of the body of Christ will have suffered for truth and righteousness' sake. Then the entire work of sacrifice apportioned for this Christian age, or Day of Atonement, will be ended, and the Millennial age of glory and blessing, ruling and uplifting, will begin; ushering in for the world of mankind the great

ransom blessing finished at Calvary. Let each dear follower in the Master's footsteps remember our privilege: *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake...”* Philippians 1:29

The Church's share in the sufferings of Christ are summed up in this *Beatitude* of our Lord: *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven...”* (Matthew 5:11,12)

Therefore, it is not only the

Lord Jesus, but, also, the Church—the *firstborn*—who will rule with him in sympathy, righteousness and love, those whom they will be judging, assisting and uplifting. Along with the *captain of their salvation* they will have demonstrated their faithfulness unto death and their complete loyalty to God's cause. They shall also be worthy of a share in his glorious reign. *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...”* 2 Timothy 2:12

WORTHY IS THE LAMB!

As our Savior demonstrated his *passion* at his first advent, he returns at his second advent to demonstrate his *compassion*, when the fruitage of his suffering and death will be realized. (Revelation 20:4) As demonstrated in the deliverance of the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt, this great Millennial day of blessing will witness both the reawakening of all mankind from the sleep of death and the restitution of all things. *“...and he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”* (Acts 3:20, 21) At that time, mankind and the earth will be restored to the harmony and perfection once enjoyed in the Garden of Eden.

During this kingdom of compassion, which God has been preparing through his beloved Son since *before the foundation of the world*, all mankind will have an opportunity to appreciate God's gift of Jesus as that sacrificial Lamb—their ransom price. This knowledge, along with their previous experience with sin and death, will enable those with good hearts to choose right over wrong. *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”* Revelation 5:12

