

About 3300 years ago Moses came to Pharaoh for the last time and demanded that he let the people of Israel leave their Egyptian bondage. He refused and because of this refusal there was going to be one final plague. This was to be most devastated plague of all; it would be the death of the firstborn; not only of the people but also the livestock. In order for the people of Israel to avoid this devastation there were instructions given to them as to what they should do. For the next few minutes I want to look at these instructions.

To begin we are told in Exodus 12 when this should take place. ***Exodus 12:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, (2) This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*** Ester 3:7 tells us that the first month was called Nisan. Nisan on the Jewish calendar coincides with our April.

Each family was instructed to select on the tenth day of the month a young lamb or kid goat. This lamb/kid had to be a male less than a year old and in perfect condition. Then on the fourteenth day of the month, four days later, several things would then take place. For one, the blood collected from this animal was to be smeared on the outside of the door. This served as a marker for the Lord later that night to pass over that household and spare them from the death of their first born. Hence the beginning of what was to become the Passover.

That night they were to roast the lamb over an open fire and eat all of the meat. ***Exodus 12:7-8 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. (8) And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.*** One of the foods instructed that the Israelites to eat were “bitter herbs.” To help us understand this symbolic food, imagine eating something bitter. This was intended to remind them of the bitterness of their bondage to the Egyptians. The bitterness of the herbs could also be a reminder of the bitterness of sin.

Another food that was part of the Passover was unleavened bread. Leaven is a rising agent, such as yeast. It produces air bubbles in bread, causing it to rise. It also causes bread to spoil and become moldy. Unleavened bread would be bread without yeast. They were about to leave Egypt and would not have time to wait for the yeast. The yeast grows slowly in the bread as they make it. Then the mixture rises. Leaven can be likened to sin and corruption, because of the way a little leaven influences a whole lump of dough, and also because of the way leaven “puffs up” the lump - even as pride and sin makes us “puffed up.” So without yeast the bread is thin and flat. Today, Jews call bread like this “matzos.”

So they were given specific instructions on what to do and when to do it. *Exodus 12:14-16* ***And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. (15) Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. (16) And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation (gathering), and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.***

This observance continued year after year and became known as the Passover or feast of the unleavened bread. It was a week-long observance. The Passover began on the tenth; on the 14th they ate the Passover, and this was the first day of unleavened bread; then for the next seven days, they ate only unleavened bread. For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical necessity because they left Egypt in such a hurry there was no time to allow for the dough to rise. After the first Passover, the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** was a testimony **throughout your generations**.

So Moses called for all the elders of Israel with specific instructions. He said to them, “Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover *lamb*. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop. The hyssop was to become an

applicator for the blood. They were to dip *it* in the blood that was in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that *is* in the basin. In addition none of them were to go out of the door of his house until morning. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike *you*.”

Why smear the blood on the doorpost? It wasn't for identification for God knew who they were. Back at the burning bush God said to Moses, ***I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows (Exodus 3:7).*** It defiles logic. The Egyptians that saw them smearing the blood likely wondered what they were doing as it made no sense at all. And when you think about it; it really doesn't make any sense. So why do it? They did it because they were commanded to do it. Making sense had nothing to do with it. What was significant was do what God told them to do.

By the time you get to the New Testament some 1300 years later, the Passover was the most significant feast days observed by the Jews. It was during this time that Jesus was crucified. The last supper that Jesus had with his twelve selected disciples was in observance of the Passover feast. ***Luke 22:7-9 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. (8) And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. Now drop down to verse 14. (14) And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. (15) And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*** So this last supper included a roasted lamb or kid goat, herbs and spices along with unleavened bread. It was in this setting that Jesus introduced the emblems of the communion.

As the thirteen were setting around the table partaking of the Passover meal Jesus told them several things. ***Luke 22:17-20 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and***

said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: (18) For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. The emphasis is on the contents of the cup, not the cup itself because it was to be divided among them. The cup contained fruit of the vine. This would likely be grape juice not fermented into wine. He offered a prayer of thanksgiving and then divided it among the twelve. But Jesus declined until the kingdom came.

It seems that Jesus is talking about the Lord's Supper being a part of the church. Although Jesus is not physically present today during communion, it is still a communion with him. *1 Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

In verses 19-20 we have the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus took bread and the cup and gave thanks. In view of verse 20, likely he divided the fruit of the vine in verse 18 but they didn't drink it until after taking the bread.

(19) And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Being the Passover, the bread was unleavened bread. The bread was more like a flat wafer, so it was necessary to break the bread in order to give some to each apostle. Jesus gave a prayer of thanks and commanded them to eat it. Jesus makes it plain that it is a memorial feast when he said, "**This do in remembrance of me.**"

"**This is my body**" means this represents the body of Jesus. It is a figure of speech intended to remind the followers of Jesus of his death and its significance. When a Christian partakes of the unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper today, he is reminded of the death of Jesus on the cross. While the resurrection is important, the Lord's Supper is to remember his death, not his resurrection. No where are we told to observe the resurrection of Jesus. This was a miraculous event to say the least; but the thing to remember is the sacrifice made for us.

(20) Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. Likewise with the cup; again he offered a prayer of thanksgiving (Matthew 26:27). He gave them the cup and commanded all of them to drink of it (Matthew 26:27). The fruit of the vine represents the blood of Jesus. Since blood represents life, the blood of Jesus represents his life. It is the blood of the new covenant. The old covenant was sealed with animal's blood, but the new covenant is sealed with the blood of Jesus. The death and the blood of Jesus provide forgiveness of sins and **"Apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission"** (Hebrews 9:22). Reconciliation with God always requires blood, an atoning sacrifice.

We all need to be saved from spiritual death. The Israelites were protected from physical death by placing lambs' blood around their doors likewise we can be delivered from spiritual death through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. I want you to notice that for the Israelites the sacrifice of the lamb ALONE did not bring protection from the death of the first born. They had to properly mark their doors with the blood of the lamb and stay inside to receive the benefits of that sacrifice. By doing this, Israel was saved from physical death on that first Passover night.

So like the Israelites were commanded to keep the Passover in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, the Christian is expected to remember our deliverance from sin by the death of Jesus. Unlike the Passover which was a once-a-year observance, The Lord's Supper is to be done each week. *Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ...*

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) After the same manner

also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. The end of verse 25 says “*as oft as ye drink of it*” which implies some regularity and Acts 20:7 tells us that regularity was the first day of the week.

Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. The blood of Jesus is the cleansing agent that removes sin just like the blood over the doorpost saved the Israelites for death of the firstborn. Recall the hyssop was the applicator of that blood long ago; today, baptism to applicator for the blood of Christ. The sacrifice is of no benefit without application. When Saul of Tarsus was confronted by the Lord on the road to Damascus he asked what he needed to do. God sent Ananias as a messenger which said this. *Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

Invitation: Where are you? Do you need to be baptized to have your sins washed away? While it may not make sense to be dunked under the water, that doesn't matter. It is what the Lord has commanded us to do and so we do it; just like smearing the blood on the doorpost.