

The New Testament Passover

No record exists of God giving any annual Holy days or festivals except for those He originally gave to ancient Israel.

We find these festivals listed in **Leviticus 23**.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 [King James] *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”*

Note it says **all** scripture, that includes the festivals, directly given by God to Moses.

These listed festivals present a remarkable picture of the major steps in God’s great plan of salvation for all humanity, the first day listed is the Passover.

Leviticus 23:4-5 [NIV] *“These are the LORD’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: The LORD’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.”*

The first month in the calendar given by God to His people, Israel, is Nisan and we must remember that God’s day begins and ends at sunset. [**Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31**]

The Passover is the first of these special annual occasions because it foreshadowed the slaying of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. [John 1:29, 35-36]

The entire plan of God is affirmed by this singular event.

Without this sacrifice, no salvation is possible.

Why?

1 John 3:4 [King James] *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”*

God’s law, given to Israel through Moses, represents the way to universal peace, happiness and wellbeing, all that the Creator God desires for His created children.

When human beings sin by breaking the law, in the eyes of our Creator this is a very serious matter.

Isaiah 59:2 [NIV] *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

The Holy Creator God cannot associate with sin in any form.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

When we sin we deserve death and prevent our Holy Creator God from giving us eternal life.

The only solution, without a Saviour, is eternal death.

Revelation 20:15 [NIV] *“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

The lake of fire is the second death, from which there is no resurrection.

Revelation 21:8 [NIV] *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”*

Listed are sinners to whom God can never give eternal life, [only given to those listed in the book of life.]

To allow such persistent unrepentant people into God’s family of created children, would only pollute the lives of all within it and unrepentant sinners would live in eternal misery that sin always brings.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

All humans have sinned at some time and so **cannot** receive from the Creator God the gift of glorious eternal life.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 [NIV] *“For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son, both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.” ... “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.”*

As the Creator and Sustainer of all life, God has every right to eradicate all who are in continual rebellion against His way of life.

Ezekiel 18:21 [NIV] *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*

This is the only way that a sinning life can be turned round.

But the sentence that the sinning human has earned still has to be paid, this is where our Saviour Jesus Christ’s death on the cross can bring redemption.

Leviticus 17:11 [NIV] *“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”*

All physical life is in the blood, so for one life to atone for another, blood has to be shed.

John 1:1-3, 14 [NIV] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” ... “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The Word was God before any physical creation and it was through Him that all things were created, both physical and spirit beings are included in this *“all things.”* The Word became, in addition to being God, a human being so He could shed His blood as an atonement sacrifice. The Word and Jesus Christ are one Being.

Philippians 2:5-8 [NIV] *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

Paul is telling us exactly what the second Being in the Godhead did in order for Him to bear the penalty of all human sin.

Hebrews 10:4-10 [NIV] *“because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, O God.’” First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’ (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will.’ He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

The Old Testament animal sacrifice anticipated the only sacrifice that could provide atonement for human sin.

The evening before His death on the cross, Jesus Christ instituted the New Testament Passover.

Paul instructs the Christian Church in Corinth as to how the New Testament Passover should be conducted.

Paul had received these instructions from Jesus Christ personally as were the other apostles. [Galatians 1:15-17]

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 [NIV] *“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”*

Following Jesus Christ’s instructions, Christians are to observe the Passover of the New Testament on Nisan 14th.

John 6:48 [NIV] *“I am the bread of life.”*

Jesus’ body is represented by unleavened bread, as it was in the first Old Testament Passover. [Exodus 12:14-15, 34]

Leaven is symbolic of sin [1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 7-8], so for the bread to represent Jesus Christ who was without sin [2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22; 1 John 3:5], it has to be unleavened.

How important is it to partake of the Christian New Testament Passover?

It is a question of life and death, according to Jesus Christ.

John 6:53-58 [NIV] *“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live for ever.’”*

Observing the New Testament Passover is a serious matter, and should not be taken lightly.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 [NIV] *“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we*

would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.”

A period of profound self-examination should precede the taking of the bread and wine.

Hebrews 10:26-31 [NIV] *“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

The shedding of Jesus Christ’s blood was of such awesome worth that God will hold accountable anyone who demeans or belittles that sacrifice.

Making salvation available to all humanity did **not** come cheaply.

1 Peter 1:18-19 [NIV] *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*

The life blood of Jesus Christ is beyond price.

Old Testament prophecies offer a glimpse at what Jesus Christ went through for our salvation from deserved death as sinning human beings. [**Psalms 22:7-17; Isaiah 52:14 – Isaiah 53:12**]

Meditation on the above scriptures could be part of our preparation to take the New Testament Passover.

An event of immeasurable significance took place in the Temple at Jerusalem the moment Jesus Christ died.

Matthew 27:50-51 [NIV] *“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.”*

To understand what happened we need to keep in mind that the Temple at Jerusalem was divided into various courts. Outside the temple proper was the Court of the Gentiles. Within the main part of the temple was the Court of the Women, next the Court of Israel, then within that the Priest’s Court, then behind a great curtain the Holy of Holies.

In the Holy of Holies the golden mercy seat was located, picturing the throne of God. Only the High Priest, symbolic of Jesus Christ, was allowed to go through this curtain into the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. [**Leviticus 23:27; Hebrews 9:1-7**]

It was this curtain that was torn from top to bottom.

The ripping of this thick fabric was from God as it started at the top and went to the bottom, symbolically allowing direct access to the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, God’s throne.

Hebrews 10:19-22 [NIV] *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”*

It is only through the death of Jesus Christ that we can have access to the mercy of God, the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. [John 14:6]

The death of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins.

Could we then be saved if Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead?

Romans 5:10 [King James] *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”*

Note we are reconciled by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ but eventually saved by His life.

1 Corinthians 15:17-23 [NIV] *“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*

It is the saving work of Jesus Christ as our High Priest at the throne of God that will complete our salvation, through a life that is now dedicated to our Saviour.

Romans 6:3-6 [King James] *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

Our baptism, by complete immersion, is symbolic of our death. Our old life of sin is crucified and we now serve only Jesus Christ not our sin.

Galatians 2:20 [King James] *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

How does Jesus Christ now live His life in us, to complete our salvation?

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you.**”*

It is through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us that Jesus Christ will live His life again on the earth.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

The very character of God, that are the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit, will “rub off” on us as we live in His presence day by day.

We have the physical example of a child, as they live day by day with their parents, take on the character of their parents.

2 Corinthians 4:16 [NIV] *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”*

This taking on the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit is likened to the renewing of our mind and human spirit on a day to day basis.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

It is out of gratitude for what God has done in His mercy through Jesus Christ that we yield to this remoulding of our lives by the Holy Spirit.

The Biblical Holy days picture this continual renewal.

Immediately following the Passover comes the seven feast days of Unleavened Bread. [**Leviticus 23:6-8**]

As we have seen leaven depicts sin so seven, depicting completeness, days means the keeping of sin out of our lives completely.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 [King James] *“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”*

The feast Paul referred to was the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Christianity is a lifelong commitment to love and obeying our Creator God.

This new life begins with our accepting Jesus Christ as our Passover Lamb who died as an atonement for our past sins.

Romans 6:8-13 [King James] *“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”*

We then live a life that is yielded to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:7-10 [NIV] *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”*

Being human we are bound to sin at times, but if we continue to walk in the light of God’s Truth, Jesus Christ and God’s Word, the Christian Bible, God will cleanse us of the penalty of that sin.

This is the meaning of the New Testament Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

What we have been studying may be new to many people including long-time Christians.

There is one part of the New Testament Passover that we have not yet studied.

Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the taking of the bread and wine.

But John relates another part of this ordinance.

This shows us what our attitude should be towards Jesus Christ and the sacrifice that He made for all humanity.

John 13:1-5 [NIV] *“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.”*

In this simple action Jesus Christ was proving what He had previously claimed and taught.

Matthew 20:25-28 [NIV] *“Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”*

To become a disciple of Jesus Christ we also have to develop the mind of a servant.

Many people would consider it too humiliating to wash the feet of someone else.

Peter reacted in this way, could not understand why, the Master he respected so much, should take on the job of the lowest of household servants.

John 13:6-8 [NIV] *“He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus replied, ‘You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ ‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’”*

This was true to character of Peter and many other people like him.

John 13:9-11 [NIV] *“‘Then, Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’ Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.’ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.”*

Confused Peter still did not understand Jesus Christ’s teaching that to be a leader, as they soon would be, that a leader must be a servant.

This is not a comfortable teaching for leaders who find it hard to serve those beneath their authority.

John 13:12-17 [NIV] *“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord”, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**”*

Peter did learn this lesson, it became part of his life and teaching. [**1 Peter 5:5**]

Matthew 28:19-20 [NIV] *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

This was the final instructions of our Saviour Jesus Christ. When He said “everything” it included His teaching of the New Testament Passover and the humble attitude of a servant that the foot washing depicted.