

Jesus, our Passover Lamb

There is no doubt from the scriptures that the “Last Supper” that Jesus ate with His disciples was in deed the celebration of the Passover, amongst other places Luke chapter 22 verses 1 to 8 make it obvious as Jesus tells His disciples to go and confirm the room set aside for Jesus and His disciples to eat the Passover.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, also called Passover, drew near. The high priests and religion scholars were looking for a way to do away with Jesus but, fearful of the people, they were also looking for a way to cover their tracks. That’s when Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot. He was one of the Twelve.

Leaving the others, he conferred with the high priests and the Temple guards about how he might betray Jesus to them. They couldn’t believe their good luck and agreed to pay him well. He gave them his word and started looking for a way to betray Jesus, but out of sight of the crowd. The Day of Unleavened Bread came, the day the Passover lamb was butchered.

Jesus sent Peter and John off, saying, “Go prepare the Passover for us so we can eat it together.” In order to fully understand the significance of it we need to look at the instructions God gave for celebrating the Passover. We find this in Exodus chapter 12 verses 1 to 13 and in particular also look at the same chapter verse 46. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, also called Passover, drew near.

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At this supper Jesus (knowing full well what He was doing, fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 31 verses 31 to 34 which reads: ““The day is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the LORD.

“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the LORD. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. They will not need to teach their neighbours, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the LORD.’”

For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the LORD. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.” In those days a covenant (an unbreakable agreement between two or more people) was only sealed by the shedding of the blood of the sacrifice confirming the covenant – in this case the blood of Christ which He knew He was going to have to shed for us.

Let us look now at some of the requirements of the Passover lamb. We can find them in Exodus chapter 12 verses 1 to 46 though that passage has been shortened for the sake of space on these sheets. The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, having taken into account the number of people there are.

You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs.

Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover. “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.

I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. This passage makes it obvious the purpose of the blood, so that the wrath of God will not fall on the people of God but pass over them.

As has already been specified, the sacrifice had to be “**without blemish**” Sin is in the eyes of God a blemish, so the only person who could stand in the place of sinners for their atonement was someone who had no sin Himself. Indeed, had Jesus had a human father He would have inherited a sin nature, automatically disqualifying Him from being able to be the perfect sacrifice that God required on behalf of man.

He became man so that He could be qualified to make such a sacrifice, and since He was and is the only human who has never sinned because His father is God the Father who does not have a sin nature, thus Jesus became in every way like the first Adam, that is before the first Adam fell into sin.

Jesus knew He was going to have to be crucified on our behalf and if you look at what happened to Jesus on the cross you will find that after He had died the Roman Soldiers in order to be sure that those people either side of Him were really dead they broke their legs, but when they came to Jesus they saw that He was already dead so instead of breaking His legs one of the soldiers lanced His heart from the side.

Luke, an eyewitness of the crucifixion then tells us that there was an earthquake and the rocks split open. At that point because of the Roman Soldier's piercing, out flowed blood and water between the cracks in the ground immediately below Him. This pouring out of blood and water left no doubt that Jesus was well and truly dead before He was taken down from the cross.

On the Day of Atonement (Leviticus chapter 23 verses 1 to 17) the High Priest would take with him into the sanctuary two male goats, one to be sacrificed, the other to have hands laid on it and sent out into the desert, illustrating the taking away of the sin of the community – the people of God. In those days it was the community of the Israelites, now it is the community of all born-again believers.

One of the other things that the High Priest did was to take the sacrificial blood (the blood of the sacrifice) into the presence of God. If everything had been done correctly the High Priest would emerge from the sanctuary of the tent of meeting and the community would know that atonement had been made for them and that for one year their sin had been taken away.

Jesus, when He had died, rose again, not that He needed to because His purpose had been completed at the time when on the cross He cried out "It is finished", not I am finished but it, the purpose of His coming. He rose from the dead, showed Himself to His disciples and literally hundreds of others to leave us in no doubt that His perfect sacrifice had been accepted by God and that for all believers their sin had been taken away, not simply for a year but this time for all eternity.