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Our Paschal Lamb

Every spring those of the Jewish and Christian faiths call to mind scriptures dealing with the importance of the paschal lamb. For most Jews, the Passover lamb marks the beginning of a nation, the end of Egyptian slavery, and the passing over of the firstborn. For most Christians, Jesus, "The Lamb of God", was slain on the cross for mankind's sins. Yet with either groups' consideration of their Old or New Testament stories, the typical Bible reader may not find connections between those events which happened in Egypt and those events which happened in Jerusalem 1647 years later. Yet, are there links? Let's explore these two occasions to determine if ties exist.

The Power of Faith

Our first consideration of the Passover may be the Seder celebration. However, the background leading up to the actual Passover on Nisan 14 in 1615 BC is as important as the actual passing over of the firstborn.

The Jewish account starts with Jehovah reading the heart sentiments of a 75 year old man in Ur. He and his wife had no children, but God made a promise to him that his seed would become a great nation. God's only condition was for him to be guided on *faith* to a distant land. Thus began the travels of Sarai, Abram, and his future seed. A man of faith!
Gen. 12:1,2; Heb. 11:9

Abraham was true to this special calling of God and after 25 years of faith-building experiences, Sarah and Abraham had their promised seed, Isaac.

(Gen. 21:3) Isaac demonstrated his faith first by allowing his father to place him on an altar of sacrifice and later in life with passing his blessings to Jacob. (Gen. 22:9; 28:1) Jacob demonstrated the same faith that his grandfather had 215 years earlier in God's promise when he trusted that God would return his family if they would leave for Egypt to be with Joseph. (Gen. 46:1-5) Joseph demonstrated his faith while in prison and in the Pharaoh's service to save his family. Finally, Moses demonstrated his faith that God would not forget His promises to Abraham, and His promise to Jacob to return his children to the promised land. Gen. 50:24

Jewish Exodus

When Jacob entered Egypt, his family totaled 70 males plus their wives and daughters. During the following 215 years in Egypt, their numbers grew to 600 thousand males plus wives and daughters. The Hebrews' lives changed from a peaceful existence to one of enslavement. Truly they were blessed to become a great nation in number, but Jacob's seed lacked the power to free themselves and thus were their cries for release.

Now God begins to reveal His plan first to Moses and through Moses to the Hebrews, and God shows His power to all in Egypt. "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, *even* my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, be-

hold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn." (Ex 4:22,23) Of all the nations, God has recognized Abraham's true seed held in Egypt as a special people, sanctified or set apart, as a "firstborn" nation to serve God.

When Moses returned to Egypt, he set forth God's plan first to develop faith in the hearts of the Hebrews, and to harden the hearts of Pharaoh and his leagues. How? With signs and wonders! (Ex. 4:30,31) It was through the first nine plagues—three involving both the Egyptians and the Hebrews, but the latter six only endured by the Egyptians—which developed the Hebrews' faith and enabled them to believe that God would deliver them from the curse of the last plague.

God's Attributes Are Shown

God instructed Moses to tell the Hebrews that the firstborn of man and beast in Egypt would die during one particular night, Nisan14. Yet God provided a means to show His Power, His Judgment, His Love, and His Wisdom with these signs and wonders.

Power: During the first two plagues, the Egyptian magicians could duplicate Moses' signs. Afterwards, the magicians were helpless. Pharaoh, depicting Satan, had only limited power compared to Jehovah's power of life and death. Ex. 9:16; Isa. 55:11

Judgment: God judges the proud and Pharaoh, full of pride, asked, "Who is the Lord...?" (Ex. 5:2) Even after being released from each particular plague, still Pharaoh did not learn humility. Because of his hard heart, his forewarned judgment would be the loss of his firstborn son. Ex. 11:5; Psa. 89:14

Love: God loved the faith of Abraham and because of a promise 430 years earlier (Ex. 12:41), He provided a means for the Hebrews to escape the death angel. Ex. 3:7,8; John 3:16; 1 John 4:16

Wisdom: God's permission for Jacob's children to increase in a favorable land that turned hostile to a point of bondage permitted their experiences to unite them as one people, with one cause (freedom), and with one faith in a God only recalled from the memories of their forefathers. Prov. 3:19, 20; Isa. 40:13, 14

The Passover

The tenth plague itself includes several elements besides the passing over found in Exodus 12. 1) Their sacred year began with the month of Nisan (Abib) and the birth of a nation. (Ex. 12:2) 2) The Passover event would be remembered once in the wilderness and then as a perpetual memorial every year in the promised land. (Ex. 12:14) 3) Leaven was removed from their homes and they ate only unleavened bread. (Ex. 12:8) 4) A one-year old lamb (goat) without blemish was selected and brought into their homes on Nisan 10. (Ex. 12:3-5) 5) The lamb was killed at the beginning of Nisan 14, about 6 PM. Having faith in its blood to save the firstborn, they placed it on the door posts and lintels of their homes. (Ex. 12:6,7) 6) The lamb was roasted whole and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Also, they had their staff in hand to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. (Ex. 12:8-11) 7) The Passover's meaning was taught, "...your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?... ye shall say, It *is* the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt,..." (Ex. 12:26, 27) 8) Finally in Egypt at midnight, God's power killed all of the firstborn of man and animals not under the lamb's blood. Ex. 12:29,30

Traveling under the full moon's light, the new nation of Israel was permitted leave, receiving the Egyptian's offerings

of precious metals, gems and linen. Ex. 12:33-42

True to God's Law given to the Hebrews in Egypt, Jews around the world today continue to remember their Passover and Exodus from bondage to freedom. Yet consider, why should any follower of Christ be interested in the events of the Jewish Passover?

Types and Shadows

Many of the events recorded in the Old Testament are types or pictures of something greater. The reality of the type is called the "*antitype*". Apostle Paul gives us three examples. "Let no man therefore judge you [by the Law as a type]...Which are a shadow of things to come [Law of Love and God's grace, its antitype]..." (Col. 2: 16,17) Also in Hebrews 8:5, "Who serve unto the example [Aaronic Priesthood-type] and shadow of heavenly things, [Christ, head and body-antitype]..." And finally in Hebrews 10:1, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things [better sacrifice-antitype], can never with those sacrifices [type] which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."

Passover Lamb being a Type

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9:22) The Passover lamb (a type) was killed, the life of the lamb for the condemned life of the firstborn, to save (justify) and sanctify God's chosen firstborn.

John the Baptist introduces the antitype of the lamb with, "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Apostle Paul shows the tie between the type (the Passover events) and antitype (Jesus' sacrificial death). "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover [lamb] is sacrificed

for us: Therefore let us keep the feast [Lord's Memorial], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:7,8)

Let's look at the eight previously cited Passover elements for their antitypical meanings.

Firstborn Nation

As Israel's firstborn were to be tested first in Egypt and Israel's other children were tested later in the wilderness as a type, Christ is the firstborn in reality having been tested, followed by his body members, the church, who will be firstborn in his likeness. (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 1:5) If there are antitypical firstborn, then there are "latter born", other flock, antitypical children to be tested and blessed during God's coming kingdom after the firstborn antitype is completed. John 10:16

As Israel was God's firstborn nation to come into a covenant relationship first, the other nations' people will come under relationship later. Jer. 31:33,34; Gal. 3:8

A New Memorial

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he and his closest disciples gathered to keep the Passover required by the Law (type). Afterwards, Jesus established a new remembrance (antitype) with only two symbols. "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. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:19,20

Removing Leaven

Leavening (type) causes bread to rise and this puffing up well shows sin's effect of pride on one's heart. (Matt. 16:12; Gal. 5:9; Mark 7:21-23). As the He-

brews were to clean their homes of all traces of leavening because a little leaven will leaven the whole lump, so are the Christians instructed by Paul to keep the Lord's Memorial without sin in their hearts. 1 Cor. 5:6

Tenth of Nisan—Lamb

On this day, the Hebrews selected a year-old lamb without blemish and they were to keep it in their homes for the next four days thereby developing a bond to it. What happened to Jesus on Nisan 10? "...Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass..." (Matt. 21:1-11; Gen. 49:10; Ekez. 21:27) As the Hebrews welcomed the Passover lamb into their homes because it marked their coming freedom, Jesus, our Paschal lamb, marked the King of Kings coming to free mankind. The Jews who praised Jesus' entry into Jerusalem expected freedom from the power of Rome. Partially blinded, they could not see the grander plan of God for freedom from sin's bondage. Rom. 11:25

Fourteenth of Nisan—Lamb's Slaying

The Jewish day begins in the evening and ends the following evening. Thus Jesus was able to keep the Passover at the beginning of the 14th and be the sacrificial lamb within the same 24 hours. As our Paschal lamb, Jesus' last day was filled with many fiery trials, picturing the roasting of the lamb. First he was betrayed by his own disciple. Then he was tried three times by unlawful religious hearings without proper accusers, lacking a just cause. Finally he was sent before three civil trials. When Pilate found no reason to judge Jesus guilty of a crime, the "leavened" hearts of the Jewish religious rulers stirred the hearts of the Jewish crowd—who four days earlier welcomed Jesus as their king—to now seek Barabbas' freedom and crucify Jesus.

A study of all the events of Jesus' last day shows that he was totally in control

of every step so that he would be on the cross as a *willing* sacrifice in the morning and breathe his last that evening. His death, once for all (Heb. 9:28), was pictured with the Continual Burnt offering type found in Ex. 29:38,39. "...thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even."

Retelling of the Memorial Story

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. 11:26) How often have we heard these words and wondered what they meant? For the Jews, their annual remembrance of the Passover and its events shows the next generation never to forget that it was God's Power that secured their freedom. When Christians keep the Lord's Memorial as instituted by Jesus, they show their faith in the shed blood of the Lamb, their common sacrificial participation (Psa. 50:5; Rom. 12:1,2), and their hope for mankind's freedom from the *Adamic death sentence*. By remembering the details of the type (Israel's exodus from slavery) and remembering the events of the antitype (mankind's future exodus from sin and death), we can see the workings of Jehovah's plan within the types, shadows, and pictures to lead us to a better understanding of the reality, God's Master Plan for mankind's redemption and restitution. Acts 3:12-26

Christians Should Be Interested

Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6) The faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the same faith in the same God for followers of Christ. All are told to worship Jehovah God in spirit and in truth, not to worship with our natural minds because the fallen flesh can be deceived. (John 4:24; 1 Cor. 2:14) We are to discern God's plans and

purposes guided by His spirit, studying His Word. (1 Cor. 2:10) "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:5)

Jesus quoted the Scriptures as a "sword of the spirit" to those who opposed him, yet his followers were guided by the same. With the blessing of God's spirit, we also can find strength and understanding in using all 66 books of the Bible. Truly a blessed book and a guide!



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