

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Scripture Memory	Pastor/Teacher
Number:	104	Gary L.W. Johnson
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### CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

When Christ died on the cross, it was not on any random day, for it was on the day of the Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), “when the fullness of time had come” (Gal. 4:4). He was the Passover Lamb. The Passover dramatically foreshadowed him and his work. He offered himself by the eternal Spirit to the Father (Heb. 9:14). The slaughter of the sacrificial lamb signified the deliverance Yahweh gave from the bondage of Egypt. At the cross a greater deliverance arrived, from sin and death, effected not on any day, but on *this* day.<sup>1</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper at the celebration of the Passover. He had instructed his disciples to prepare the Passover. The bread and the wine were the bread and the wine of the Passover meal. Prior to leaving for the Mount of Olives, they sang the final part of the song of praise that was part of this celebration. The focus was on the notion that God passed over the Israelites – thus sparing their lives for the sake of the blood of the lamb (Ex. 12:13). The lamb was a sacrificial lamb. In Exodus 12:26-27 we read: *And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.* The lamb that was slaughtered and whose blood served as a sign on doorposts pointed to him who is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Paul says of him: *For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us* (1 Cor. 5:7). The meal that the Israelites had in Egypt during the Passover night was the meal of redemption. In faith they anticipated that the exodus would take place as promised by God. The Passover had to be celebrated every year again to commemorate the Lord’s redeeming acts. Christ linked the bread and wine of the Passover meal with his death: this is my body – this is my blood. It is significant that it was not at an ordinary meal that he made bread and wine into signs and that he did not use the meat, but only the bread and wine. The Lord’s Supper is related to the Passover but is not identical with it. It constitutes its fulfillment. The Passover was both a sacrifice and a meal. Christ himself became the sacrifice and he gave us the meal. The Lord’s Supper therefore does not have the character of a sacrifice. This needs to be maintained especially over against Rome. It is the meal of redemption, which rests on Christ’s sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

- I. **THE PASSOVER.** Alfred Edersheim, a highly respected Old Testament scholar from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, says, “the name of the Passover, in Hebrew *Pesach*, and in Aramæan and Greek *Pascha*, is derived from a root which means to *step over*, or to *overleap*, and thus points back to the historical origin of the festival.”<sup>3</sup> W. H. Grispen concurs: “*Passover* comes from the word *pasha*, meaning to *jump past; to pass by; to spare*. Thus the Passover can best be seen as *the Feast of the Lord’s passing over and sparing His people* (cf. v. 12), as is also expressed in its English name, *Passover*. It was to be an expression of gratitude toward the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> R. A. Cole writes: “The cognate verb is used here to explain the noun that gives its name to the festival. The verb itself is in turn partially explained by the second half of the verse: no *plague* or *blow* will fall on them. In 1 Kings 18:21 this verb means to *limp*, and the cognate adjective means *lame* frequently in the Old Testament. Because of this, editors have made wild guesses that the original meaning was a *limping dance*. But this verse is the only explanation of the name of this festival given in the whole of the Old Testament

(cf. what was said of the meaning of the YHWH, above) and must therefore be taken seriously. Whether it was correct etymology or a pun, *pesah* to Israel meant *a passing-over* or *a leaping over* and what was applied to God's act in history on this occasion, in sparing Israel."<sup>5</sup> That being said, there is a passage in Isaiah 31:5, 6 which also sheds light on the meaning of this term. Here is the NIV translation:

“Like birds hovering overhead,  
the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem;  
he will shield it and deliver it,  
he will *pass over* it and will rescue it.”

The noted Old Testament scholar E. J. Young explains: “Just as the Lord of hosts will fight against Zion, so also will the Lord of hosts (note the repetition of these words) exhibit protection over Jerusalem. The central and basic thought of the verse is protection and is expressed by a finite verb in the imperfect. The concept is then strengthened by two infinitives absolute, and each of these is accompanied by a verb in the perfect with *waw* consecutive in order to complete and fulfill its meaning. In covering or surrounding, the Lord will deliver; and in passing over he will save. Isaiah chooses an expression that calls to mind the Exodus, when the destroyer went through the land (Ex. 12:13; 23:27). As then the destroyer passed over the house of Israelites, so now like birds God passes over His people and delivers them. As remarked earlier, these two comparisons complement one another. First, God is compared with a strong lion, bold, unafraid, powerful; then with tender and loving birds which protect their nest. But can mere tender birds protect their nest? To support the latter comparison we have the first. He who protects is He who is strong as a lion to accomplish His purposes.”<sup>6</sup>

II. ***THE PASCHAL LAMB.*** This lamb was a type of Christ. What is a type? *A type is a real person, place, object, or event that God ordained to act as a predictive pattern or resemblance of Jesus' person and work, or of opposition to both.* Let me unpack that a little:

- *A type is a real person, place, object, or event:* it is true, real, and factual – not a made-up allegory.
- *That God ordained:* it resembled Jesus' person or work not by mere coincidence but by divine plan.
- *To act as a predictive pattern or resemblance:* the same truth is found in the Old Testament picture and the New Testament fulfillment.
- *Of Jesus' person and work:* the truth in the picture is enlarged, heightened, and clarified in the fulfillment.
- *Or of opposition to both:* God also gave prophetic pictures of Jesus' enemies.

David Murray observed: “The Passover lamb was a type of Jesus. The Passover was a real event. The truths of substitutionary sacrifice and redemption by blood were found in both the type and the antitype [literally *in place of the type*, meaning *fulfillment of the type*]. These truths were enlarged, heightened, and clarified in the fulfillment. The fulfillment was the God-man – not just a lamb; and He redeemed from spiritual and eternal bondage – not just physical and temporary bondage.”<sup>7</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** Leon Morris captures the Apostle's concern in this chapter: “*Christ our passover is sacrificed.* It is this that makes all things new for Christians. Christ has put away their sin by His death. He has made them to be *unleavened*. The Passover was the annual commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt in ancient time. The Israelites had offered up their lamb or kid in order that the destroying angel might pass over them. They were delivered, and the slave rabble emerged from Egypt as the people of God. In using this imagery Paul reminds his readers that the death of Christ delivered them from deadly peril, and constituted them the people of God. In this context, however, the important thing is the emergence to new life. One feature of current Passover observance was the solemn search for and destruction of all leaven

before the festival began (for seven days unleavened bread only might be eaten). This purging out of all leaven was done before the *pascha*, the passover victim (either a kid or a lamb), was offered in the temple. But Paul points out that *Christ our passover* has already been sacrificed. It is time and more than time that all leaven was cleansed out.”<sup>8</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Crossway, 2019), P. 638.

<sup>2</sup> J. Van Gendern and W. H. Velema, *Concise Reformed Dogmatics* (P&R, 1992), p. 802.

<sup>3</sup> A. Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry And Services As They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (rpt. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> W. H. Gispen, *Exodus: Bible Student's Commentary* (Zondervan, 1982), p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (IVP, 1973), p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary II* (Eerdmans, 1969), p. 378. Geerhardus Vos points out that “the Thought of the sparing of the firstborn was clearly present in the Passover, for the name means *passing over; sparing.*” *Reformed Dogmatics III* (Lexham Press, 2014), p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> D. Murray, *Jesus On Every Page: 10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ In The Old Testament* (Thomas Nelson, 2013), p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Eerdmans, 1958), p. 90.