



BETHEL AG CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

THE FEAST OF PASSOVER

FOR CHRIST, OUR PASSOVER LAMB,
HAS BEEN SACRIFICED. (1 CORINTHIANS 5:7)

The Seven Feasts of the Lord

The Feasts of the Lord were instituted by Almighty God to the nation of Israel. These were seven feasts, or holidays, that the nation of Israel observed. The purpose of these seven annual assemblies was not primarily to eat or to celebrate. The purpose was to paint an intentional picture, which represented God's perspective of His work and purpose, in a specific way, at a specific time, and for a specific reason. Generally speaking, the feasts represent the work of Lord Jesus Christ in the death, burial, resurrection, and His second coming. These feasts are not merely seven random types and shadows of the Old covenant; there is an important order to them.

The coming of the Messiah brought fulfilment and substance to each one of the seven feasts for all the types and shadows of the Old covenant. Jesus did not randomly select a language for feasts when He taught the multitudes and told His parables. In fact, Jesus gathered up the God-given pictures in the feasts of Israel and declared Himself to be their fulfilment. (**Matthew 22, John 6:51, Mark 14:24**)

The feasts were intricately tied to the agricultural seasons in Israel, and therefore they represent the journey of Christ from a single dying seed to a multi-member, resurrected harvest. The true fulfilment of each of these feasts is an inward, spiritual, and eternal experience of Christ.

Overview of Seven Feasts

1. **Passover**
2. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread**
3. **The Feast of Firstfruits**
4. **Pentecost – The Feast of Weeks**
5. **Rosh Hashanah – The Feast of Trumpets**
6. **Yom Kippur – The Day of Atonement**
7. **Sukkot – The Feast of Tabernacles**

Why are these seven holidays called as the ‘Feasts of the Lord’?

The English word translated as ‘feast’ in the Bible has originated from the Hebrew word *mo’ed*. Translating *mo’ed* as ‘feast’ can be misleading because, for many, the word ‘feast’ implies a great meal, often accompanied by some sort of celebration. While it is true that some of the feasts of Israel involved meals and celebration, the word *mo’ed* essentially means ‘appointed place, appointed time, appointed meeting’ and the purpose of these feasts is to meet with the Lord at the appointed time in an appointed way.

Leviticus 23:4, “*These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.*” These feasts are appointed by the Lord, and they are owned by the Lord. He calls them “*my feasts*” (**Leviticus 23:2**).

Collectively, the “feasts” of the Lord form the divine appointment calendar, with Jerusalem as the meeting place (**Isaiah 33:20**).

What are the timings of these feasts?

The feasts are split into two major groups that can be summarized as - spring feasts and autumn (fall) feasts. The four spring feasts are: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost . The first three spring feasts are celebrated on the 1st month, ‘Nisan’ on the Jewish Calendar - (i.e., March / April), and the feast of Pentecost on the 3rd month, ‘Sivan’ on the Jewish Calendar - (i.e., May). The autumn feasts are Trumpets, Day of Atonement ,and Tabernacles; they are celebrated on the 7th month, ‘Tishri’ on the Jewish Calendar - (i.e., September / October).

<u>The FEASTS OF ISRAEL</u>			
Spring Feasts			Fall Feasts
Passover	50 days	120 day	Trumpets
Unleavened Bread	→ Pentecost	→	Day of Atonement
First Fruits			Tabernacles

What do these feasts represent?

On a natural level, each of the feasts celebrates some aspect of Jewish history. But God has given them for a far greater reason. These seven feasts were given to foretell the sequence, timing, and significance of the major events of the Lord’s redemptive career. The events commence with Calvary where Jesus voluntarily gave Himself for the sins of the world (signified through Feast of Passover), and climax at the establishment of the messianic Kingdom at the Messiah’s second coming (signified through Feast of Tabernacles). The first four holidays depict events associated with Messiah’s first coming and the final three holidays depict specific events associated with His second coming.

Every one of the feasts is tied to the Cross and the Believer's experience of all that God accomplished there. We come to know each of these feasts in the person of Christ and we grow towards God's eternal purpose, towards the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (**Ephesians 4:13**)

Are Believers recommended to follow these feasts?

Believers in Christ are not responsible to keep these feasts. However, knowledge of them greatly enhances their faith. The Lord kept every one of them without fail; Lord Jesus even celebrated Passover on His last earthly night. The fulfillment of all these symbolic feasts culminated in Lord Jesus Christ – our Messiah.

Many people erroneously equate the keeping of holy days with righteousness before God. Some slip into synagogue for Yom Kippur or other festival days. They would like to believe that they are righteous in God's eyes for doing their religious "duty".

God rebuked Israel for keeping the external requirements of the Law, while disregarding a heart relationship with Him: *"The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates: They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them."* (**Isaiah 1:13-14; Amos 5:21**)

The Holy Bible likens the feast days to shadows, which prophetically point to the person and work of the Messiah (**Colossians 2:16-17**). Together, these feasts outline the work of the Messiah from Calvary to the messianic Kingdom. It is far more powerful to be washed in the Blood of Jesus (the true Passover Lamb) than to eat a Passover meal.

What is the Passover?

Passover is an eight day festival in early spring, celebrated from 15th through 22nd of the Hebrew month Nissan (i.e., April 10th – 18th, 2017). It commemorates the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. In Hebrew, it is known as Pesach (which means "to pass over") because God passed over the Jewish homes when the Egyptian firstborns were killed on the very first Passover eve.

What is the background to celebrating the Feast of the Passover?

The background story is that God's chosen people, Israelites, were subjected to backbreaking labor and unbearable horrors of slavery for decades under the Egyptian pharaohs. God saw the distress of His people and sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message, *"Send forth My people, so that they may serve me."*

However, despite numerous warnings, Pharaoh refused to heed God's command. God then sent upon Egypt ten devastating plagues that afflicted them and destroyed everything from their livestock to their crops.

The Israelites were instructed to bring a "Passover offering" to God. A lamb or kid was to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every Israelite home, so that God would pass over these homes when He came to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering was to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

At the stroke of midnight in the Hebrew month of Nissan, God visited the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians and killed all their firstborn. While doing so, God spared the children of Israel by "passing over" their homes – hence the name of the feast. (**Exodus 12**)

This plague broke Pharaoh's resistance and he chased the former slaves out of the land. Six hundred thousand adult males, in addition to many more women and children, left Egypt on that day and began their journey with God to Mount Sinai. The Pharaoh and his army pursued them again, but in vain; the Israelites walked through the open Red sea while the Pharaoh's army was annihilated in the waters.

The children of Israel were commanded to observe the anniversary of this Exodus every year and this is known as the Passover. During the Passover meal, the youngest child in the family would ask four questions, as a part of tradition.

- A. *Why is this night different from all other nights?*
- B. *On all other nights, we may eat leavened bread but why on this night only unleavened bread (matzah)?*
- C. *On all other nights, we are allowed to eat all vegetables but why only in this night we have to eat bitter herbs?*
- D. *On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night, we eat reclining?*

Then the family leader narrates the story of Passover to everyone at the Passover table.

What are the core ingredients of a Passover meal?

God wanted three symbolic foods to be eaten that night – the **lamb**, **matzah (unleavened bread)**, and **bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8)**. The *lamb* to be eaten had to be a year old, which depicts the innocence of the Messiah. The lamb had to be roasted with fire, which portrays the judgment that would befall it instead of the firstborn. *Matzah* (unleavened bread) was to be eaten, to symbolize purity of the sacrifice; because leaven, with its souring characteristic, was often a symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). *Bitter herbs* were to be eaten as a reminder of the suffering of the Lamb and to raise questions in the minds of the children so that the Exodus story could be rehearsed from generation to generation (**Exodus 12:26-27**)

What is the spiritual significance of Passover?

Passover Lamb signified our Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet John the Baptist recognized Jesus as *“the Lamb of God”* (**John 1:29**), and the apostle Peter links the lamb without defect (**Exodus 12:5**) with Christ, whom he calls a *“lamb without blemish or defect”* (**1 Peter 1:19**). Jesus is qualified to be called One *“without blemish”* because His life was completely free from sin (**Hebrews 4:15**).

In Revelation, John the apostle sees Jesus as *“a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain”* (**Revelation 5:6**). Jesus was crucified during the time that the Passover was observed (**Mark 14:12**).

1 Corinthians 5:7, *“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*

Believers of Lord Jesus have symbolically applied the sacrificial blood of Christ to their hearts and have thus escaped eternal death (**Hebrews 9:12, 14**). Just as the Passover lamb’s applied blood caused the “Destroyer” to pass over each household, Christ’s applied Blood causes God’s judgment to pass over sinners and gives life to Believers (**Romans 6:23**).

The central theme of Passover is **REDEMPTION**.

As the first Passover marked the Hebrews’ release from Egyptian slavery, so the death of Christ marks our release from the slavery of sin (**Romans 8:2**). The same way as the first Passover was held in remembrance as an annual feast, Christians are to memorialize the Lord’s death in communion until He returns (**1 Corinthians 11:26**).

Wine that is used for the Passover meal symbolized Lord Jesus’ Blood that He shed on Calvary. There were four cups of wine used in the Passover meal. Scholars believe that Lord Jesus took the cup of redemption, which He called *“My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins”* (**Matthew 26:27–28**).

What is the central theme of the Passover?

The central theme of Passover is **REDEMPTION**, when God redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt. We miss its full implication, if we don’t understand the ancient meaning of that word. If a man fell into debt and went into slavery, a kinsman (blood relative) needed to “buy” him back to freedom. And once the man was redeemed by being “purchased”, his relationship to his redeemer changed. Now, he was specifically bound to his redeemer and he became “his”, but only as a close family member and not as a slave.

God used this image when He told Moses to say to His people,

*"I am the LORD, and I will **bring** you **out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will **deliver** you from their bondage. I will also **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments." Then I will **take** you for My people, and I will be your God." (Exodus 6:6-7)*

This verse is recited every year at Passover to remember the relationship that God began with His people through His redemption. Each of the four verbs God used in the promise above ('bring out', 'deliver', 'redeem', and 'take') is related to one of the four cups of wine used in the Passover meal (*Sedar*). The third cup of the Passover meal is called the "*Cup of Redemption*". This cup was associated with God's promise, "I will redeem you". This is the cup that Jesus held up at the last Passover supper, when He said it was His blood shed to redeem us as His people, in a new covenant for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was describing, how He has "purchased us", through His atoning death, to set us free from slavery, sin, and death. By this transaction, we have been brought into a new relationship with Him, as His covenantal people. His disciples understood the magnitude of Jesus redemptive "purchase" of us and expressed it that way:

"You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." 1 Peter 1:18-19

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."*

Is there a relation between the Passover and Holy Communion (Lord's table)?

There is this connection between the Passover and Holy Communion - the former was the type or shadow and the latter the memorial of the death of Christ. Thus, we read in **1 Corinthians 5:7**, "*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.*" This sentence establishes the connection. The passover was the memorial of Israel's redemption from the bondage of Egypt; and the Holy Communion is the memorial of the Church's redemption from the heavier bondage of sin and Satan. Hence, similar to every faithful Israelite, who surely keeps the passover in the appointed season and according to all the rites and ceremonies thereof; so will every true and faithful Christian celebrate the Holy Communion in its appointed season, and according to all the principles laid down in the New Testament to respect it.

He has "**purchased us**", through His atoning death, to **set us free** from **slavery, sin, and death**.

Conclusion

In Exodus, we see that the death of the lamb and the subsequent exodus established a perfect division, or separation, between Egypt and God with His people. God's judgment did not end the existence of Egypt, but it perfectly ended Israel's relationship to it.

Exodus 14:13 *"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever."*

Israel literally never saw Egypt again because God's judgment was perfect and permanent. However, failing to experience this judgment in their hearts, Israel still saw themselves as citizens of Egypt and often longed to back to the familiar land of sin and death. Nearly the entire first generation lived in the fear of death, in blindness, and an internal slavery to an already defeated enemy. A greater view of this will be discussed in the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Lord Jesus was very clear that His death on the Passover was the **fulfillment of the feast, and the beginning of the true and eternal covenant with God** .

John 6:53-56, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you . . . For My flesh is true food , and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."*

Through the Cross of Christ, God fulfilled the great division, or separation that we saw, take place in **Exodus 12-14**. He established an eternal boundary between the first and second, Egypt and Israel, Adam and Christ, death and life, etc.

Colossians 1:13, *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."*

Book references:

The Seven feasts of Israel - Zola Levitt

The Feasts of the Lord - Kevin Howard & Marvin Rosenthal

The Feasts of Israel - Kevin J Conner

If you have any further questions, please email us at info@bethelag.in or walk into the church office for any counselling regarding this issue.

67, RING ROAD, HEBBAL, BANGALORE – 560 024

080 6568 7777 | WWW.BETHELAG.IN

TO BE CIRCULATED AMONG CHRISTIANS ONLY.