

Preparations for the evening were ready. When the hour came, Jesus and His disciples went to the upper room and reclined around a three-sided table. Jesus opened the evening: *“With fervent desire I have chosen to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”* (Luke 22:15).

At the first Passover in Moses’ days, only three items were on the table; roasted lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8). They had special significance, being viewed in the light of Israel’s history with the Messiah and His Kingdom. (Talmud Sanhedrin 99a)

(1) THE LAMB: A Submissive Messiah

Passover is a time to remember how God prepared to free His people from slavery in Egypt with the tenth plague, He instructed the Israelites to select one male lamb per household, slay it and apply the blood to the outer doorpost of their homes to indicate their faith in the sacrifice being able to save their first born. This is all described in the 12th chapter of Exodus.

The lamb was a picture of the submissive Messiah to come. Even while being led to slaughter, the prophet in Isaiah 53:7 foretold of Him: *“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.”* As told in later Scripture, Jesus suffered silently before the rigorous and evil authorities as they interrogated Him. (Matthew 26:62-63; 27:12-14; Mark 14:60-61; 15:3-5; Luke 23:8-9; John 19:9). Remember too, earlier in Jesus’ ministry, a Levitical priest, John the Baptist, saw Jesus and declared: *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

(2) THE UNLEAVENED BREAD: A Sinless Messiah

God also commanded the Israelites to eat unleavened bread to represent the unblemished sinless purity of the coming Messiah. Leaven symbolizes sin and its effect. Unleavened bread symbolizes purity and holiness. Isaiah prophesied in 53:10: *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His Days, and the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His land.*

In Leviticus we’re reminded that sin offerings had to be perfect. Exodus 12:5 tells us the Passover sacrifice had to be without blemish. The Gospels tell us the religious authorities challenged Jesus with questions. They tried to entrap Him, searching for fault, but found none. Then came the Pharisees and Herodians and after that, the Sadducees, all finding no imperfections. As 1 Peter 1:19 tells us, God allowed these inquisitions to illustrate that Jesus was to be recognized as the lamb without blemish.

(3) BITTER HERBS: A Suffering Messiah

The original Passover (Exodus 11) describes the first born being under the penalty of death. However, by following instructions, lambs became the substitutes. The bitter herbs on that “Night to Remember” represented the suffering that would happen the next day. This was all prophesied 700 years earlier in Isaiah 53:4-6. After the “Night to Remember” Passover meal, Jesus, filled with dread and sorrow, entered the olive grove. He was then arrested and flogged as described in the 14th chapter in Mark. It was a bitter scene, yet He was willing to suffer through it all. Why?

The Bible teaches that, like the first-born in Egypt, everyone born of man is under the sentence of spiritual death (Romans 3:23; 5:12 and John 3:3). The good news of Passover is that Jesus - the submissive, sinless and suffering Lamb of God suffered, died and rose again so that “IN HIM” we have redemption through His blood according to the riches of His GRACE (Ephesians 1:7) and we, by faith, have everlasting life!!!

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