



## LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Fellow-laborers,

Passover is a new beginning, a fresh start.

The Christian life is not easy. It is a constant struggle against Satan's influences; the pulls and temptations of a society that rejects Jesus as their King; and especially the struggle against our own sins and weaknesses. We grow tired and we grow weary. We can even get to the point of asking, "is it all really worth it?"

But *one time each year* Our Lord brings us back home to focus on that single event that changed everything. Every Passover we commemorate the death of God on the cross. This singular event means that God wins and Satan loses. It also means that we win! Jesus' sacrifice brings victory to untold millions who have no hope and brings defeat to the evil forces that seek to destroy you and me. It is a memorial of victory!

Jesus knew we needed the Passover and so, the night before He died, He instituted the New Testament Passover and told us to do it every year on the same evening as a memorial. He told us to wash one another's feet. He said we should share bread with one another as a symbol of His soon to be broken body. And He told us to take a sip of wine which symbolizes His own shed blood of the New Covenant. After this, He went out, allowed Himself to be arrested; humiliated in a mockery of justice; and then beaten severely and hung on a cross. Later, a Centurion came along and finished Him off with a spear so that prophecy would be followed to the letter.<sup>1</sup> God's blood poured out on the ground.

But that is not all.

### **God was dead for three full days and three full nights.**

You see, part of the Passover event was the DEATH OF GOD! The Creator Himself<sup>2</sup>, the one who formed Adam from the dust of the ground and had always existed with the Father – DIED!

How can God die? How can an ever-existent, omnipotent, immortal being – *die*?

This is one of the great mysteries of the Bible and a very important part of the Passover story. The only way God could die was that the One who became Jesus had to give up – empty Himself – of His eternal life<sup>3</sup>; come to be born flesh and blood; live as a man – and experience DEATH!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John 19:33-37

<sup>2</sup> John 1:1-4

<sup>3</sup> Phil 2:6-8

Can we really, fully grasp the incredible sacrifice Jesus made?

He gave up His God-head for you and for me! If you have always existed (*which, by itself is very difficult for the human mind to grasp*); and you CANNOT die because of your Yahweh-nature<sup>5</sup>; then you must somehow **GIVE UP** that eternal nature in order to die! That is just what Jesus did!

If the Most High God did not resurrect Him from the tomb, Jesus would have stayed dead, rotted to dust and be obliterated as a God being! Jesus actually put His Own Eternal Life on the line so that the door could be opened for Him to share that same Eternal life with us!

What a POWERFUL act of selflessness and sacrifice! What a statement about how much He loves us! By dying, He paid off our own debt (*eternal death penalty*) to God caused by our sins. And remember that Jesus did all this for us WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS!<sup>6</sup> He didn't say, "*Repent first and then I will die for you!*" He died first.

The New Testament Passover is so important that, from the day it was instituted, Satan began his campaign of **watering down** its meaning for us.

Satan started by diminishing the person of Christ. Jesus is usually portrayed as a weak, long-haired, sort of sickly looking person who walks around with a long, perpetually sad face. His humanity is played up and His pre-existence as God is played down. The idea is that Jesus was only this "really good guy" who died undeservedly on the cross for us; and if we can "only believe just that" – we will be saved.

Jesus was not just some nice guy who died for us. He was All Mighty and All Powerful God who died for us! He was ETERNAL! And He shed His ETERNAL LIFE force – His YHVH Life – to come and save us!

Then Satan attacked the date of the New Testament Passover itself. The Apostolic Church observed Passover as Jesus had instructed – on the same night He was betrayed<sup>7</sup>. But within a short time apostasy entered in and the 14<sup>th</sup> Nissan Passover was changed to Easter. Bunnies and colored eggs were later added, along with Sunday sunrise worship. The meaning of Christ's sacrifice was all but lost.

Then there is the "Lord's Supper" or "Communion" type of service, usually without what some believe to be degrading – the foot-washing part. Sometimes this is done four times a year or once a month or just anytime you decide to do it! The command of Christ and the clear practice of the Apostolic Church are thrown out the window!

**THIS WATERING DOWN OF THE AWESOME MEANING OF THIS MOST IMPORTANT EVENT EVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE DIMINISHES THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS THE CHRIST!**

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<sup>4</sup> Heb 2:14-15

<sup>5</sup> YHVH – The name of God that He revealed to Moses at Horeb. It means literally "I AM THAT I AM", or "self-existent" – a being that relies on no one else or no other thing for His existence. This is what the Bible calls -- ETERNAL LIFE! Jesus gave up His YHVH existence in order to die.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:8

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 11:23

Instead of an extremely meaningful event that was watched by God the Father and all the Holy Angels across the expanse of the entire universe, we end up with counterfeits that do not focus on the profound meaning of Our Lord's ultimate personal sacrifice. It is a tragedy and a shame.

The Church of God has maintained the correct evening and the correct ceremonies of the New Testament Passover. This ceremonial event consists of three parts: the foot-washing, a sign of humility and service to one another; the taking of the symbol of bread which represents the broken body of Jesus; and the wine which symbolizes Our Lord's shed blood of the New Covenant.

Passover is a chance for us to come together in humility and focus on and remember the true meaning of our relationship with one another and with Our Lord Jesus Himself. It is a chance to forgive the past sins of our brothers and sisters and ask them to forgive us. This is the foot-washing part. Are we able to *spiritually* wash the feet of our brethren by forgiving their offenses toward us?

We are able to focus on the betrayal, sham trial and severe beating and humiliation of God. Did you know that Pilate tried to save Jesus three times? One of those ways was to have Him scourged and beaten which left Him bloody with strips of flesh torn off His body. One prophecy by King David said you could see his bones!<sup>8</sup> Pilate did this in the hopes that the rabid crowd would be satisfied and let Jesus go. But they would only be satisfied by His death.

Passover gives us the chance to ponder the meaning of His shed blood. Jesus called it the blood of the New Covenant!<sup>9</sup> The Old Covenant never offered eternal life. The New Covenant does. That is because Jesus died and our sins are erased by His substitute death. This means we are no longer under the curse of death if we bring ourselves into a New Covenant relationship with Christ. Taking the wine reminds us that we have a binding contract with Jesus Our Savior and Lord that He will honor in the Day of the Last Trumpet Sounding.<sup>10</sup>

And finally, the Passover gives us a fresh start. We are all sinners. Any Real Christian who claims he has no sin is a LIAR!<sup>11</sup> The guilt that follows the breaking of God's laws can become burdensome and cause a wedge between us and Our God. We don't want to face God because we have sinned. We are the same as our ancient mother and father who hid themselves from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden because of sin.

Some people have decided to get rid of the guilt by getting rid of the Law! They are only deceiving themselves. God gave us a way to get rid of our guilt by going to Him and reminding Him about the binding Covenant relationship we have with Him and confessing our sins to Him. We receive forgiveness because of Jesus' sacrifice.

Passover is so important that no True Christian should miss it. Take it at home if you have to; and don't make any excuses by saying you are "unworthy" to take it or because someone you don't like will also

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm 22:16-17

<sup>9</sup> Matt 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thes 4:16

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 1:8

be there. Passover is a chance to have a new beginning – a new start! Don't waste this miraculous opportunity because of sin or holding a grudge. REPENT, and go take the Passover!

Jesus clearly taught that our Eternal Lives depend on our participation in the Passover ceremony:

John 6:53-58

*“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”<sup>12</sup>*

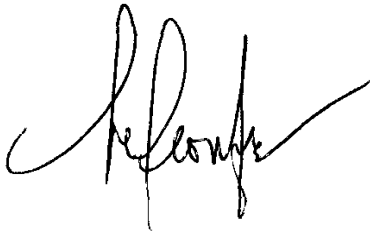
These are very sobering words. Jesus takes the Passover very seriously because His personal sacrifice was so great! Man can diminish that sacrifice under the influence of Satan. But God DOES NOT!

If we are baptized and have made our commitment to Jesus as our Savior and King, we must recognize the supreme value of His sacrifice for us. We do this by taking the symbols that symbolize that sacrifice and our personal covenant relationship with Him.

There was no greater sacrifice than the one Jesus made for us. Let's make sure we honor that sacrifice by eating His Body and drinking His Blood of our New Covenant with Him.

May God give you Grace during Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In Our Lord's service,



T. Leon Sexton

P.S. Gloria and I are headed to Burma for Passover. Please pray for a safe journey and please pray for all who will be traveling this year to keep the Passover.

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<sup>12</sup> KJV