

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread

This lesson is rather "meaty" for young children so you may like to read it to them in stages. The referenced scriptures support the text and are included for your information.¹

The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are the first Feasts that we keep each year. They teach us something very important about God's Plan.²

The First Passover

Just before the first Passover, God's people - the Israelites - were living in Egypt. But they were slaves! And they were VERY unhappy. So they cried out to God to save them and He heard their prayer. He sent a man named Moses to rescue them.

Moses and his brother Aaron asked Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, to let the Israelites go. But Pharaoh said, "NO"! And then he made the people work harder! So God told Moses and Aaron to give Pharaoh a warning. God was going to send horrible plagues on Egypt if Pharaoh didn't let the Israelites go. But Pharaoh wouldn't let the people leave. So God sent nine terrible plagues on the Egyptians. And Pharaoh still wouldn't let the Israelites go!

So God decided to send one last plague on Egypt. It would be the worst plague of all! On the night of Passover, it would kill all of the firstborn children. It would kill all of the firstborn animals. But the Israelites would be protected if they followed God's instructions. They had to kill a Passover lamb and put some of its blood on the doorposts of their houses. Then they had to eat a special meal of roasted lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:1-13).

¹ For more information and more scriptures that support the text, see the versions of this lesson for older children.

² God is creating a "family" and His Plan is to make us part of that family. For more information, see "The Holy Days and God's Plan" lesson in this series.

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread

The Israelites did what God told them to do and they were protected. But all of the firstborn of the Egyptians *and* the firstborn of their animals died. EVEN Pharaoh's firstborn son died! And that's when Pharaoh finally changed his mind! He sent a message to Moses and told him to take the Israelites and GO!

After that, God told the Israelites to keep the Passover every year. He wanted them to remember how He had saved them from death. He wanted them to tell their children all about it (Exodus 12:14, 26-27). So they did. But the Israelites didn't know what we know today. They didn't know that the Passover pictures the very first step in God's GREAT plan for mankind. It pictures the time when Jesus, God's Son, died to save us all from death!

Jesus and the New Testament Passover

The night before Jesus died, He and His followers (disciples) were keeping the Passover (Mark 14:12-16). They ate a meal of roasted lamb, unleavened and bitter herbs just like the Israelites did. But while they were eating, Jesus showed them a NEW way to keep the Passover.

He washed their feet. He gave them a little unleavened bread to eat. He gave them some wine to drink. And then they sang a hymn. So this is how we keep the Passover today. We don't need to kill a lamb like the Israelites did. We don't need to eat the special meal of roasted lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

But what does it all mean? Well, we wash each other's feet because Jesus wants us to love each other. He wants us to learn to serve each other. We eat the small piece of unleavened bread and drink the wine because it reminds us of what Jesus did for us. It reminds us that Jesus is our Saviour. He is our Passover lamb and He died to save us (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread

The reason Jesus had to die is because we all sin and break God's Law. And the "punishment" for breaking God's Law is death. This means that when we die we would just stay dead. We would never have the chance to live again. But God WANTS us to live again. He wants to make us part of His Family. So Jesus died FOR US - He died so our sins can be forgiven and we can be saved from death!

Three days and three nights after Jesus died, something amazing happened! God brought Him back to life! And now Jesus lives with God in heaven! This was a VERY important part of God's Plan. Jesus died so our sins can be forgiven, but it's because He was brought back to life that we can have the chance to live forever! (Romans 6:23b; Romans 5:10).

The Days of Unleavened Bread

After the Passover are the Days of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:14-20). During these days we put leaven out of our homes and eat unleavened bread. This is bread made without leavening - the ingredient that makes it rise or "puff up". We do this because *leaven* is sometimes used in the Bible to picture sin - and God doesn't want us to sin. Jesus died to save us from our sins, so now we need to stop sinning! We need to live God's Way of Life instead. Eating unleavened bread during these days reminds us to do this.

God tells us to keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread forever (Exodus 12:17). That's because they teach us about the important part Jesus played in God's Plan. You see, it's because of Jesus, and what He did for us, that God's Plan can come true! And when it does, we'll all be able to live in God's Family for ever and ever!! How amazing is that!