Passover

What?

If you don't understand Passover, you can't fully understand the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion.

For example:

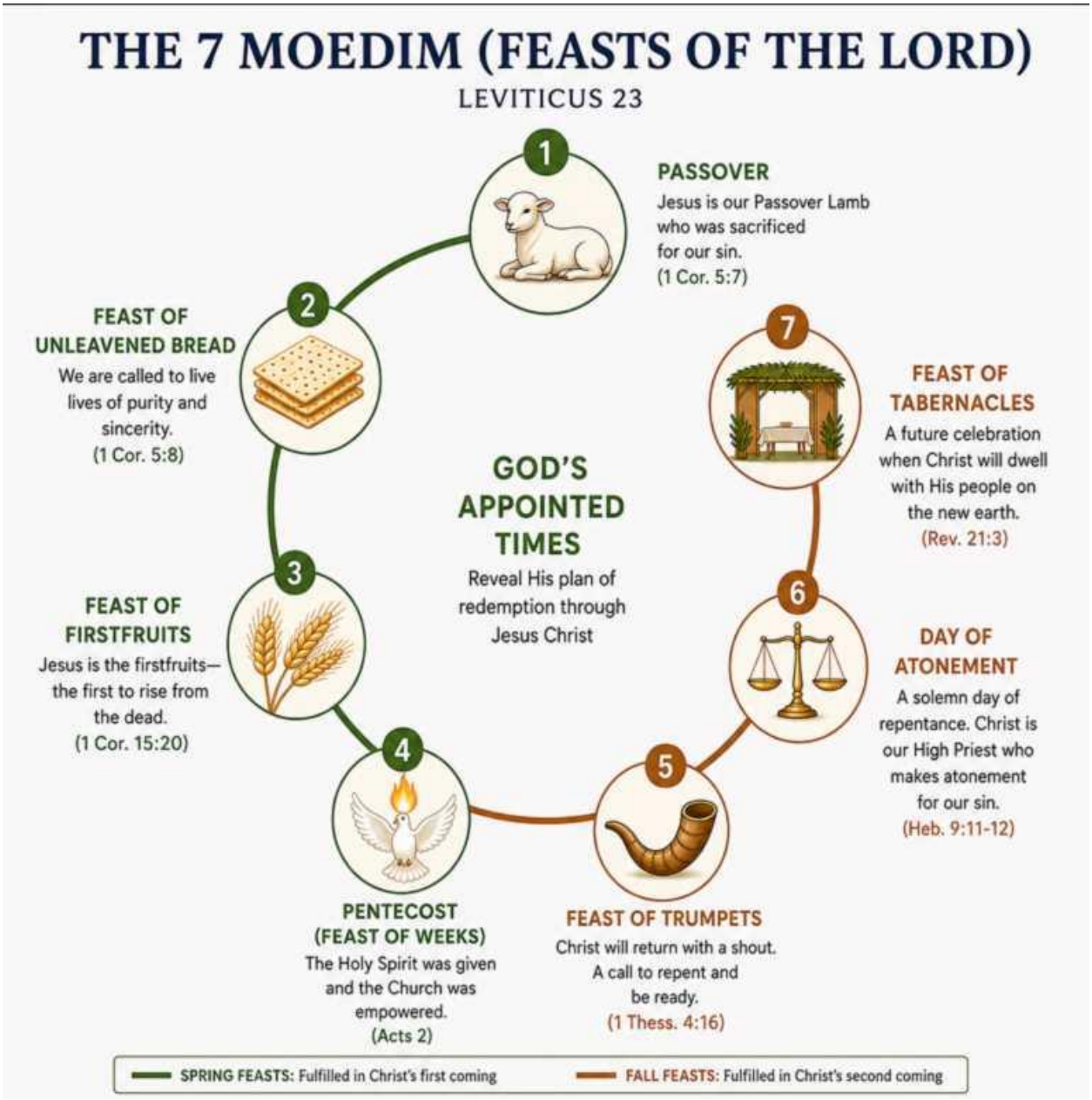
- Why John the Baptist calls Jesus "the Lamb of God?"
- Why Paul calls Jesus "our Passover?"
- Why the New Testament is careful to specify the day Jesus entered Jerusalem in His triumphal entry?
- Why Jesus underwent such intense questioning before His crucifixion?
- Why the repeated declarations of Jesus' innocence are important?
- Why Jesus' death at 3pm on Nisan 14 is significant?
- Why the Jews hurried to get Jesus' body buried before sundown?
- Why the Book of Revelation still calls Jesus "the Lamb?"

Lev_23:2-5

1. Having established the 7th-day Sabbath as a weekly moed (appointed time) in verses 2-3, God begins His list of 7 annual moedim in verse 4.

2. The seven annual moedim are:
    1. **Passover, vs 4-5**
    2. Feast of Unleavened Bread (ULB), vs 6-8
    3. Day of Firstfruits, vs 9-14

4. Feast of Pentecost, vs 15-22
5. Day of Trumpets, vs 23-25
6. Day of Atonement, vs 26-32
7. Feast of Tabernacles, vs 33-43



What is Passover? Lev_23:4-5

On the first month, the 14th day of the month, at twilight (lit., "between the two evenings") is the Passover of Yahweh.

When Moses wrote Leviticus in the wilderness, Passover was fresh in Israel's mind. God had just delivered them from Egyptian bondage.

They remembered these events: Exo_12:1-14

- God directed Israel to celebrate Passover while they were still slaves in Egypt
- The first month?
  - Exo_12:2 God established the month of Aviv/Nisan as the first month in the religious/feast calendar. (start ~Mar 21)

(Aviv is the biblical month's name. Nisan is from the Babylonian captivity.)

  - In contrast, Israel's 'civil' calendar starts in the 7th month of Ethanim/Tishri, on the Day of Trumpets; it's also the day known as Rosh haShanah. (start ~Sept 21).

- A lamb for each household, v3-4
- Criteria for the Lamb, v5 Lev_22:20 spotless requirement
- Keep the lamb (in your house) for 5 days, then slaughter him on Aviv 14, v6
- Put his blood over/around your door, v7
- Eat the roasted lamb that night, with matzah and bitter herbs, v8
- Eat the head, legs, entrails (organs), v9
- Eat it all. Leave nothing. Burn anything leftover. v10
- The lamb was selected according to the number of people who could eat it. Those people gathered under the protection of that lamb's blood, and shared in eating that lamb's flesh.
- Everyone under the blood will be safe from judgement, vs 11-13
- Passover is a Perpetual statute of remembrance, v14

Passover is a work day, a day of preparation.

- In Lev 23, Passover is not a Sabbath day. It's not a day of commanded rest.
- Many of the 7 annual moedim in Lev 23 are Sabbath Days, sometimes called "high Sabbaths," as in Joh_19:31
    - John 19:31 refers to the first day of ULB which began at sunset after Jesus' crucifixion on Passover.
        - Aviv 14 (Passover) ended at sunset and the next day (Aviv 15) then started.
        - This is why the Jews were in a rush to bury Jesus before sunset--to avoid violating this high Sabbath.
- Various levels of rest were required during the moedim:
    1. The weekly Sabbath, v3, "you shall not do any work"
    2. The first day of the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, v7, no ordinary work
    3. The 7th day of the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, v8, no ordinary work
    4. Feast of Pentecost, vs 21, no ordinary work
    5. Day of Trumpets, vs 24-25, a "shabbaton," or Sabbath day
    6. Day of Atonement, vs 28-32, a "shabbat shabbaton," or Sabbath day of complete and solemn rest
    7. The first day of the 7-day Feast of Tabernacles, vs 35, 39, a "shabbaton," or Sabbath day
    8. "The 8th day" immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles, vs 36-39, a "shabbaton," or Sabbath day

- NT Scripture calls Passover "the day of preparation" for the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Mar_15:42 Joh_19:14 Joh_19:31
- On Passover, families had to do work:
- Remove all the leaven from their homes

- Slaughter, butcher, and roast the lamb
    - According to Josephus (Wars 6.423) Passover Lambs were killed between 3-5pm on Aviv 14
- Prepare the matzah and bitter herbs
- Make everything ready for the meal after sunset
- In modern times, every Friday is now called "the day of preparation" for every weekly Sabbath.

So What?

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he declared:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”
—Joh_1:29

Jesus fulfilled the Passover symbols:

- **The Lamb of God was without blemish.** Jesus was completely without sin—the spotless Lamb of God (1Pe_1:18-19).
    - Jesus' 'triumpal entry' into Jerusalem happened on Aviv 10, IAW Exo_12:3. Joh_12:1, Joh_12:12-13
    - Then the Lamb (Jesus) was publicly examined for 5 days by the nation's leaders, with no fault found in Him. Mat_22:46 Mar_12:34 Luk_20:40 Joh_19:6
- **The lamb died in place of the firstborn.** Jesus died in our place, bearing the judgment our sins deserved.
- **The lamb’s blood had to be applied.** It was not enough that a lamb had died somewhere in Egypt. Each household had to trust God’s promise and place the blood upon its own door.
- **Those under the blood were spared from judgment.** God said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exo_12:13). We are saved from judgment because Christ’s blood covers us.

- **None of the lamb's bones was broken.** Although the soldiers broke the legs of the other crucified men, they did not break Jesus' legs, fulfilling the Passover pattern (Exo_12:46; Joh_19:33-36).
- **The lamb was eaten by the redeemed household.** The Passover was not merely observed from a distance; the people personally received and partook of God's provision. Joh_6:51-58
- **The sacrifice opened the way out of slavery.** Through the lamb's death, Israel was released from bondage to Pharaoh. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we are released from bondage to sin and death.

Sep 6

- Passover is not the end of salvation. It's the beginning.
  - Not of works, lest any man boast
  - After Egypt, Israel wen't into the wilderness where God taught them to completely depend and rely on Him. The wilderness is where God covenanted with Israel, transforming the Hebrews from a mob of slaves into a nation following Yahweh into victory. The wilderness is where Yahweh prepared them to enter their geographical promised land of rest.
  - In the same way, after we're born again (our Passover) we undergo discipleship training by the Holy Spirit to prepare us to enter our spiritual promised land.

Paul says plainly:

"Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."
—1Co_5:7

1Co_10:1-6 These things happened as examples for us... 1Co_10:11-12

Jesus did not merely resemble the Passover lamb. He is the reality toward which Passover lambs always pointed.

- The blood of an animal protected one household from physical death for one night.

- The blood of Jesus cleanses every believer from sin, bringing them into covenant relationship with Yahweh, and delivering them from eternal condemnation.

At the first Passover, God did not examine the worthiness of the people inside the house.

- He looked for the blood on the door.
- In the same way, our confidence before God does not rest upon our goodness, religious performance, or ability to save ourselves. It rests upon the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The central message of Passover is this:

A spotless lamb died in the place of those facing judgment, and everyone who trusted God's promise and sheltered under its blood was delivered.

Now What?

Passover calls for more than understanding its symbolism. It demands a personal response.

Come under the blood

Am I relying upon the blood of Christ, or am I relying upon my own goodness and religious works?

God's promise is certain:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
—Rom_8:1-2

Leave your Egypt behind

The blood did not deliver Israel so that they could remain comfortably in Egypt--which represents our carnal nature. God redeemed them in order to bring them out of slavery and make them His people, a holy kingdom of priests. Exo_19:6 Rev_1:6 Rev_5:10

Jesus did not save us merely from sin's penalty. He also calls us out of sin's dominion. Col_1:9-14

We must not keep returning in our hearts to the life from which He delivered us.

A

So, frequently ask yourself:

What attitude, habit, relationship, fear, or secret compromise is God's Spirit calling me to leave behind?

Receive the whole Christ

Israel was not permitted to select only the parts of the lamb that appealed to them. They had to eat the whole lamb.

Likewise, we cannot receive Jesus only as the Savior who forgives us while rejecting Him as the Lord who commands us. We must receive the whole Christ—His forgiveness, His teaching, His authority, and His transforming life.

Jesus is not merely someone whose death we remember. He is the living Lord upon whom we continually depend.

Be ready to move when God speaks

The Israelites ate with their belts fastened, sandals on their feet, and staffs in their hands. They expected God to act, and they were prepared to follow immediately. Redeemed people should live with that same readiness:

"Lord, wherever You lead, I will follow. Whatever You tell me to leave, I will leave. Whatever You call me to do, I will obey."

We must not be so attached to the present world that we are unwilling to move when God calls.

Passover asks us two personal questions:

Am I sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb?

And, if I am:

Am I living like someone who has truly been set free?

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Judgment has passed over us, slavery to sin has been broken, and the way into God’s freedom and rest now stands open.

Let us leave Egypt, following the Lamb, and living as His redeemed people.

The "Lamb of God" Reigns Today, and Will Reign for All Eternity

Rev_5:6-14 The Lamb in the midst of God's throne

Rev_7:9-17 The Lamb our Shepherd

Rev_12:11 They overcome by the blood of the Lamb

Rev_19:7-9 The marriage of the Lamb

Rev_22:1-3 The throne of God and the Lamb