

Foreshadowing of Jesus in the Passover

Introduction

Many of the events that took place in the Old Testament were “foreshadowings” – or “types” – of the events that would happen in *Jesus’* life. In other words, the events in question “point” us to Jesus.

One rather obvious example of such a foreshadowing was God telling Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was told to sacrifice his **beloved son** – and Isaac was **willing** to be sacrificed. This definitely points to God allowing his beloved Son Jesus to be crucified – and Jesus willingly being crucified.

Another example is the events in the life of Joseph. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, and was sold into slavery in Egypt. He underwent many trials there; but he remained faithful to God. As a result, Joseph rose to the position of “second in command” of Egypt; and was therefore able to save his family – and everyone in Egypt – from starving to death in a severe famine.

Similarly, Jesus was betrayed by his “brothers” (the Jewish leaders), and was sentenced to death by the Romans. However, Jesus remained faithful to God, during all of his trials. As a result, he rose to the position of “second in command” of all creation; and he therefore has the ability to save the Jews – and the whole world – from everlasting death.

There is another item in the Old Testament, which also contains many “foreshadowings” of Jesus. That item is the Passover – the events that allowed the Israelites to escape from Egypt. Some of the Passover events are obvious “types” of Jesus; while other Passover events are not quite so straightforward.

The Original Passover

The tenth plague in Egypt was the death of the firstborn – all of the firstborn sons in Egypt were killed. Before that plague occurred, the Israelites were told that each family needed to sacrifice a lamb, in order to protect themselves from that plague. Here is an excerpt from the passage in question:

Exodus 12:5-15, 13:3 (ESV):

⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

⁷ “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰ And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it:

with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

³ Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

Here is a summary of four main events, which occurred in the original Passover:

1. The Israelites sacrificed a lamb which was "without blemish" – i.e., a lamb without any flaws, or defects, of any kind.
2. The Israelites ate the body of the lamb; and the blood of the lamb saved their lives.
3. The Israelites also ate unleavened bread – that is, bread which had not been affected by yeast – on the Passover night.
4. The Israelites gained their freedom from slavery to Egypt, as a result of the Passover.

From what I can see, all four of those events are "foreshadowings" of the sacrifice Jesus on Passover.

A Lamb without Blemish

The lamb that was sacrificed needed to be "without blemish". Jesus did not have any sin in him; so he was **spiritually** "without blemish". For example:

1 John 3:5 (ESV):

⁵ You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

Hebrews 4:15 (NIV):

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Since Jesus did not have any sin, he was able to be the *spiritual* Passover lamb. John the Baptist was the first person to recognize Jesus as such:

John 1:29,32-34 (ESV):

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

The apostle Paul also made that same identification:

1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV):

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.

Jesus is the only person who has never sinned – and as a result, he is the only person who was able to be our spiritual Passover lamb.

The Body and Blood of the Lamb

The Israelites ate the body of the Passover lamb, and the blood of the Passover lamb saved their lives. During the crucifixion, Jesus offered up his own body and blood – as our spiritual Passover lamb.

During the last supper, Jesus told the disciples this:

Matthew 26:26-29 (ESV):

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

As listed above, Jesus told the disciples to symbolically “eat his body” – which mirrors the Israelites eating the body of the Passover lamb.

Similarly, the blood of Jesus was shed, so that our sins could be forgiven – and that, in turn, allows us to be saved from everlasting death. This was foreshadowed by the Israelites placing the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts, to save their families from death in the tenth plague.

The Symbolism of “Leaven”

The Israelites also ate unleavened bread on the Passover night – and during the entire seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In Scripture, leaven – or yeast – is symbolic of sin. Both Jesus and Paul provided explicit examples of this symbolism:

Luke 12:1-3 (ESV):

1 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (ESV):

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?
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. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

So, the unleavened bread that is eaten during Passover reminds us that we need to remove sin from our lives, in order to be faithful followers of God and Jesus.

In other words, it is not enough for a person to just *say* that he believes in Jesus, but make **no effort** to remove sin from his life; because that would be hypocrisy – similar to the “leaven of the Pharisees”.

Freedom from Slavery

During the original Passover, the Israelites gained their freedom from slavery to Egypt. Jesus’ sacrifice has provided us with the ability to gain our freedom from slavery to **sin**:

John 8:31-36 (ESV):

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ³³ They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

The apostle Paul also wrote about Jesus allowing us to be free from slavery to sin:

Romans 6:17-18,22-23 (ESV):

¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, as a result of Jesus' Passover sacrifice, we have the opportunity to become free from slavery to **sin** – similar to the way that the Passover allowed the Israelites to become free from slavery to **Egypt**.

Conclusion

There are (at least) **four** “foreshadowings” of Jesus, contained in the events of the original Passover:

1. Jesus is *spiritually* “without blemish” (without sin) – and as a result, he was able to serve as our spiritual Passover lamb;
2. Jesus told the disciples to symbolically “eat his body”, and his shed blood allows us to be saved from everlasting death;
3. Jesus emphasized the importance of removing the “leaven” – sin – from our lives, in order for us to be his true followers;
4. Jesus' sacrifice provides us with the opportunity to be free from slavery to sin.

Thank you Lord Jesus!