

## CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

Passover, the central rite and symbol of Judaism, is based on the experience of the liberation of the Hebrew people from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-15:21). It is called Passover both because the Lord passed over the homes of the Hebrews, sparing them from the death that came to the first-born in Egypt, and because the Hebrews passed over the Red Sea as if it were dry land. Passover celebrates God's steadfast love and devotion to His people and their freedom in Him.

Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, Passover preeminently signifies God's rescue and forging together of His chosen people, Israel. The Lord repeatedly brings this event to mind as He encourages and exhorts His people to return to their covenantal responsibilities (Judges 6:7-10; I Kings 10:17-19; Psalms 80:10, 11; Jeremiah 11:1-8; Micah 6:1-8).

Throughout His saving work, Christ becomes our Passover (*pascha* in Greek). Through Him we experience liberation from sin, death, and the devil. St. Paul exclaims, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast" (I Corinthians 5:7, 8). He is the Paschal Lamb (Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; Revelations 5:6-14) who gave Himself up in sacrifice "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10-14) to reconcile us with God. At every Pascha - "Easter" - the Church sings:

Today a sacred Pascha is revealed to us, a new and holy Pascha, a mystical Pascha, a Pascha worthy of veneration, a Pascha which is Christ the Redeemer.

In many typological details, the Passover of the Jews clearly points towards Christ as our Passover.

1. The Passover lamb, whose blood was smeared by the Hebrews on their doorposts in the sign of the Cross, was a male without blemish; Jesus was a male without blemish who died on the Cross.
2. The blood of life the Passover lamb saved the first-born of the Hebrews from death; the blood of Christ saves all those believing in Him from eternal death (Romans 5:8-10; I Peter 1:17-19).
3. The Passover lamb had none of its bones broken (Exodus 12:10, 46); Jesus also had no bones broken as He was sacrificed (John 19:31-36).
4. The Hebrews escaped from the burden of slavery in Egypt by passing through the Red Sea; Christians pass "from Egypt, from the burden of sin," being "set free and

saved" through the waters of Holy Baptism. For in the waters of Baptism, we are "baptized into His death," "crucified with Him," and raised up "in the likeness of His resurrection" to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-11).

St. John Chrysostom marvels at the power of Christ's blood:

If the type of it had such great power . . . in the midst of Egypt, when smeared on the doorposts, much more the reality . . . if death so shuddered at the shadow, tell me how would it not have dreaded the very reality? This blood is the salvation of our souls; by it the soul is washed, and made beautiful and . . . more gleaming than gold (see Revelations 7:13, 14).

Sustained and strengthened by the blood of Christ our Passover, we resume daily our journey to the eternal promised land, the promised kingdom to come.