

March 9

Double Passover

Most Christians and Jewish people recall the origin of one Old Testament Jewish festival. This festival comes from captivity in Egypt and a final plague, that is, the death of the firstborn male child in every house. Households of faithful Jews were spared as the Lord **“passed over”** those homes. Hence, “The Passover...”

This final plague would have afflicted the Hebrews if God hadn't made special provision to protect them. After nine plagues, the Israelites had witnessed God's power as He manipulated the forces of nature and His creation, probably all of which the Egyptians worshiped as deities or forces their Egyptian gods controlled. However, in the plagues, God's message was this: any Egyptian gods rated only a small “g”. The Lord God of the Israelites got the G. He was certainly “over” the Egyptian gods.*

Stubbornness can cause problems. Ask Pharaoh. After the *third* plague, his own religious leaders told him, "*This is the finger of God*" (Exodus 8:19). It would take seven more to break his brazen resistance. One of the tragic ironies of the Egyptian priests – often called “magicians” in Exodus – is that they tried to *prove their power by duplicating or intensifying the plagues*, causing even more suffering as they retaliated. What has changed? Even now, people resist God and try to show their prowess or independence from Him. The result? They often exacerbate their spiritual and material troubles, as if producing *more* gnats or frogs.

"Pesach," the word for Passover, means both to shield from danger and to literally pass or jump over an object. Notably, Jesus used a metaphor of a hen shielding her chicks with her wings (Mt. 23:37) when He described His desire to shield His rebellious people in Jerusalem. This protecting is an act of love and self-sacrifice. It's about spiritual intimacy with God and relying on Him, no matter what.

The second use of the term is emphasized in Exodus 12:13 where God tells Moses, **“... and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you...”** This is an act of grace and what we might call forensic forgiveness: these people have been pardoned and cannot be harmed!

Only God's grace can protect or shield us from God's judgment. These words point to the incarnation, Jesus, Who is called **“our Passover”** in I Corinthians 5:7. By believing in Christ, we enjoy the blessing of knowing that He is protecting us even though things may not be going the way we want. And we remember that He has placed His mark of mercy on us - the anointing of the Holy Spirit in our baptism. When we celebrate the New Testament Passover, Holy Communion, we are inside the Lord's house. And when He looks in our heart and sees Himself there (think “baptized *into* Christ” Gal. 3:27), He passes over in protection and mercy.

*the Scriptures (Dt. 32, Acts 19) indicate that “gods” (and the idols of gods) are not really gods, but can be occupied by demons, so it sometimes permits viewing them as more than just an idol.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, our Passover, may we faithfully celebrate Your ultimate Passover when we eat and drink the bread and wine, receiving Your sacramental body and blood. Give us great peace in our hearts at the communion rail and as we go from it to face whatever is outside. May we believe that You are protecting us in Your way and Your time. May we believe that ultimately we will not come into judgment but will pass into life because of Your promise. Amen.*