

Christ in the OT Sacrifices

BIBLE BASICS

The Meaning of Blood

Blood is a symbol of Life. Moses commands Israel:

“Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat.”

(Deuteronomy 12:23, NKJV)

Blood is giving of one's life. And the Book of Leviticus explains why blood is central to sacrifice:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

(Leviticus 17:11, NKJV)

From these texts we observe three clear truths.

1. Blood is not presented as a magical substance, but as a sign of life. To pour out blood is to offer life.
2. Blood is given “upon the altar” by God's command—atonement is not human invention but God's provision.
3. Atonement requires a life offered in place of another, teaching that reconciliation with God cannot be achieved by denial of sin but by God's appointed means of restoration.

St. Paul confirms this in his epistle to the Hebrews:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

(Hebrews 9:22, NKJV)

And similarly in Romans 3:25, “Whom God set forth as atonement by His blood.”

This does not mean God is bloodthirsty. It means sin is truly deadly, and restoration is costly. In fact, through the blood we receive redemption, remission of our sins and atonement. The Gospel of St. Matthew 20:28 “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Christ is our Passover. He offered to us His sacrificial Body and Blood, as the True Paschal Meal. As we receive Christ's sacrificial Body and Blood we also pass in Him and with Him to the new life, accepting His risen life.

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”
(1 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV)

The sacrificial system trains the conscience to recognize that communion with God is not regained by passivity and excuses, but by cleansing and active reconciliation.

Why Were Sacrifices Offered in the Old Testament?

The Law prescribes sacrifices not as random rituals, but as ordered responses to life with God in a fallen world. The sacrifices address:

1. **Communion with God** (thanksgiving, dedication, fellowship)
2. **Sin and uncleanness** (cleansing and restoration)
3. **The justice and mercy of God** (atonement provided by God)

The Old Testament commonly describes five offerings:

- **Burnt Offering**
- **Grain (Meal) Offering**
- **Peace (Fellowship) Offering**
- **Sin Offering**
- **Trespass (Guilt) Offering**

Sacrifices are offered for sins committed that displeases God and for death. Burnt, grain and peace offerings chiefly express **dedication, thanksgiving, and communion**. These voluntary offerings made by fire as a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord. Sin and Trespass offerings address death, which is mandatory. Mandatory atonement for the sins of the offerer. Offered outside the tabernacle.

When sacrifices are offered, the offerer acknowledges and admits his/her sin. Realization is essential for return to God and for acceptance of the offering/sacrifice. The offerer would not offer a sacrifice unless he realized his sinfulness. Realizes that the wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Understand the concept of redemption. St. Paul is clear in his epistles:

in Hebrews 9:22 says:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission”. Hebrews 9:12

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all.” Ephesians 5:2

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma”. Ephesians 1:7

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”. Romans 3:24-25

“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”.

Every sin must be punished either in he who committed the sin or in someone else that takes his place (ransom). If you don't believe that Christ is the redeemer and you don't hide behind His divine grace and mercy, must pay the punishment yourself (death). Justice of God must be exercised one way or another. Either through the Cross of Christ or eternal death to he who rejects the ransom.

Believe that the sacrifice carries his/her sins. The Father's justice is now satisfied when He sees that the Sacrifice (Christ crucified) has carried the punishment of sin (death). Isaiah 53:6 “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”.

Principles When Offering: Confession and Identity

The offerer brings the offering to the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting. He confesses his sins while placing their hands on it. By placing his hands on it, the sins are transferred from the offerer to the sacrifice. This act is not casual. It is the ritual sign of **identity**: the offerer is no longer approaching God “as he is,” but through the sacrificial gift - showing a transfer of identity. The offerer put his own identity upon the sacrifice. The offeror and the sacrifice become one.

This teaches a theological principle that the New Testament later reveals more fully: sinners do not come to God by self-justification, but through a mediator and an offering appointed by God.

The Burnt Offering: Total Consecration

The burnt sacrifices are offered from bulls, lambs, goats, turtle doves, or pigeons. The burnt offering is wholly given to God. None is eaten. It is consumed in fire as a “sweet aroma” to the Lord. This teaches that true worship is not bargaining but **total surrender**.

The animal is required to be without blemish, and the whole sacrifice ascends to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect and willingly gave His life for us.

The offering is then skinned and cut into pieces which is a symbol of the examination that Jesus went through regarding his deed and words. This prepares us to understand Christ's perfect obedience:

“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

(Philippians 2:8, NKJV)

The burnt offering teaches that the heart of sacrifice is not merely suffering, but obedience offered to the Father, a theme fulfilled perfectly in Christ.

“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”

(Hebrews 5:8, NKJV)

The Grain Offering: The Life Offered in Thanksgiving

The grain offering is made of flour, oil, and frankincense, seasoned with salt, with no leaven or honey (Leviticus 2). Unlike the blood sacrifices, this offering highlights not death, but a life offered in thanksgiving and dedication.

From its elements, the theology becomes visible:

- **Flour** (ground fine) suggests a life yielded, formed, and prepared.
- **Oil** signifies anointing and consecration.
- **Frankincense** rises as fragrance—service offered to God.
- **Salt** signifies covenant faithfulness.

The prohibition of **leaven** teaches the rejection of corruption in what is offered to God, and the avoidance of **honey** warns against presenting worship as mere indulgence or self-pleasure.

This offering foreshadows Christ as the true bread of life, offered not only in death, but in the holiness of His entire earthly life.

The Peace Offering: Communion and Shared Joy

Cattle, sheep, or goats were the animals typically offered as peace offerings. These animals were to be without blemish, symbolizing the purity and perfection that God requires in those who approach Him. The offerer would place his hand on the head of the animal, signifying the transfer of his sins and guilt to the animal. The animal would then be slaughtered, and its blood would be sprinkled on the altar. The fat and certain choice parts of the animal would be burned on the altar as a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord.

The remainder of the peace offering was divided into three parts.

- One part was given to the priests as their portion,
- another part was given to the offerer and his family, and
- the third part was offered to the poor and needy.

This division of the offering symbolized the sharing and unity that was to exist among God's people.

The peace offering was often associated with joy and gladness. The offerer and the priest would eat together from the sacrifice, signifying their fellowship with one another and with God. It teaches that reconciliation culminates in **communion**.

Through the sacrifice of the animal, the offerer's sins were atoned for, and he was restored to a right relationship with God. In this way, the peace offering foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who offered Himself as a peace offering for the sins of the world. The peace offering is offered for thanksgiving to God, Eucharist. The peace offering therefore prepares us to understand that salvation is not only forgiveness of guilt, but entrance into shared life with God.

The peace offering also served as a reminder of the need for repentance and confession before communion.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”
(1 Corinthians 11:28, NKJV)

Christ here is a symbol of joy not only to the Father but to everyone as well. The peace offering is offered for thanksgiving to God, in the Eucharist.

In the burnt offering, Christ offers Himself to the Father while in the peace offering, He offers Himself to everyone. Through Christ we are reconciled with the Father, in the burnt offering, as only blameless males were offered. In the peace offering, the sacrifice could be of male and females (relating to the offeror).

The Sin Offering: Cleansing and Bearing Sin

Outside the tabernacle, a bull or a goat is offered as a sin offering. The sin offering, addressing uncleanness and sin, is associated with removal and separation because sin does not belong in the holy presence.

Here we must state the point carefully. It is not that “God cannot look” in the sense of weakness or limitation. Rather, Scripture teaches that God is holy, and sin cannot be embraced as acceptable. The separation of the sin offering teaches the seriousness of sin and the necessity of cleansing.

This prepares the mind for Christ, who bears sin not by becoming morally sinful, but by taking sin's burden and penalty upon Himself:

“All we like sheep have gone astray... and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”
(Isaiah 53:6, NKJV)

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree...”
(1 Peter 2:24, NKJV)

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV)

The Eucharist, a Christian sacrament, reflects this sacrificial offering. In the Eucharist, Christ offers Himself to the Father as both the "Offerer" (the Priest) and the "Offering" (the Sacrifice). Through our union with this Sacrifice, known as "Holy Communion," we identify with the sacrifice and receive forgiveness of sins. The prayer in the St. Basil Liturgy acknowledges this, praying, "We offer unto You Your gifts from what is Yours, for everything, concerning everything, and in everything."

The sin offering therefore teaches a canon-wide truth: God condemns sin, yet provides a bearer of sin so the sinner may be restored.

The Trespass Offering: Guilt, Restitution, and Healing the Breach

Like the sin sacrifice, the trespass offering is offered outside the Tabernacle. The Trespass offering involves presenting a male ram or its monetary equivalent to the Lord, along with restitution for any stolen or damaged property. Additionally, a one-fifth surcharge is added to the compensation, underscoring the gravity of the offense.

While the Sin Sacrifice primarily addresses the inherent nature of sin, the Trespass Offering focuses on the specific actions and consequences resulting from sinful behavior. Two distinct categories of Trespass Offerings are recognized in Scripture.

- **The first** pertains to offenses committed against the holy things of the Lord, such as mishandling consecrated objects or failing to adhere to prescribed regulations.
- **The second** category encompasses trespasses against individuals, involving actions that cause harm, injustice, or deprivation.

The trespass (guilt) offering addresses sin not only as corruption but as **damage**, harm done to God's holiness and to neighbor. It therefore includes restitution: what was taken or harmed must be made right, with an additional portion.

This offering deals with the act of sins. There are two types. The first is against the Holy things of the Lord and the second against people. Sin Sacrifice addressed the nature of sin while the Trespass Sacrifice addressed the act of sin. By Christ's death every sin can be forgiven.

This teaches that repentance is not merely sorrow, but restoration and healing of breaches. The trespass offering trains the conscience toward responsibility, without denying God's mercy.

Christ fulfills this not only by forgiving, but by restoring what sin has ruined. Crucially, the Trespass Offering finds its ultimate fulfillment in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Through His redemptive work on the cross, every sin, both in its nature and its actions, can be forgiven and reconciled. Christ's perfect sacrifice provides the necessary atonement for the transgressions of humanity, enabling believers to receive pardon, healing, and restoration in their relationship with God.

Christ on the Cross: Priest, Altar, and Offering

The sacrifices teach categories. The Cross reveals their fulfillment.

Christ is not merely a victim. He is the **High Priest** who offers Himself freely:

- He prepares the altar not in a building but on Golgotha.
- He carries the wood, as Isaac carried wood up the mountain, but He is the true beloved Son who completes the offering.
- He offers Himself, on the altar of sacrifice, in obedience, not compulsion.
- The fire of suffering consumed the sacrifice on the altar, signifying the washing away of the sins of all generations.

When Christ says:

“It is finished.”
(John 19:30, NKJV)

Before the sacrifice turned into ashes, Christ uttered the profound words, "It is finished." These words declares that the sacrificial pattern has reached its completion—not abolished as meaningless, but fulfilled as accomplished reality.

In response, we partake of the blood of the sacrifice, represented by the Eucharist. We symbolically sprinkle it around the altar, which represents our souls. This act signifies the cleansing and purification of our hearts and minds. As 1 Corinthians 3:16 states, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

The Blood of Christ and Our Communion

The blood shed from Christ's side holds immense significance in the salvation of mankind. Scripture teaches that remission, redemption, and sanctification are inseparable from the offering of Christ's life.

First, the New Testament confirms the Old Testament principle that forgiveness is granted through sacrificial blood:

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”
(Hebrews 9:22, NKJV)

Yet Christ's blood is not merely shed on earth. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf:

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”
(Hebrews 9:12, NKJV)

This blood is also not held at a distance from the Church. In the Eucharist, believers receive true communion in what Christ offered:

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”
(1 Corinthians 10:16, NKJV)

Therefore, Christ’s sacrifice is not only an event to be remembered, but a reality in which we are permitted to participate. For those who are spiritually dead, Christ commands participation in His life:

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.’”
(John 6:53, NKJV)

Because Christ’s blood is offered “for us,” its effects are described in the strongest terms: justification, redemption, and forgiveness.

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”
(Romans 3:24–25, NKJV)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”
(Ephesians 1:7, NKJV)

At the Cross, then, Christ offers His life to the Father in perfect obedience; and through communion with Him, we become partakers of what He offered. His obedience is counted on our behalf because we are united to Him. The Father accepts the sacrifice from Him and receives us **in Him**.

Matthew 27:25 Clarified

The Gospel records that a crowd said:

“And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”
(Matthew 27:25, NKJV)

This verse must not be used to assign collective or perpetual blame to the Jewish people as a whole. In context, it describes a specific moment and a specific crowd. Judgment belongs to God alone, and the New Testament consistently teaches that all peoples stand in need of repentance and mercy. Theologically, Christ’s blood is not given to fuel hatred, but to bring forgiveness to the world—including those who once opposed Him, many of whom later believed (Acts 2:36–41).

The New Testament emphasizes that His blood secures true redemption:

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”
(Hebrews 9:12, NKJV)

And the Church receives this sacrifice sacramentally:

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?”
(1 Corinthians 10:16, NKJV)

Thus the sacrifices reach their goal: not continued slaughter, but union with Christ’s once-for-all offering.

What the Sacrifices Teach Us About Christ

From Scripture’s pattern, we learn:

- Blood signifies life offered, and atonement is God’s gift, not human invention.
- Sacrifice teaches that sin is deadly and cleansing is costly, yet mercy is provided.
- The offerings train Israel to recognize consecration, thanksgiving, communion, cleansing, and restitution.
- Christ fulfills all sacrifices as:
 - **Priest** (the One who offers)
 - **Offering** (the One offered)
 - **Atonement** (the One who reconciles)
 - **Communion** (the One shared)

In Christ, the sacrifices are not repeated because their purpose is accomplished. What remains is the life they were always meant to form: repentance, holiness, thanksgiving, and communion with God.



Review Questions

1. What is the blood a symbol of?
[Blood is a symbol of life.]
2. What are the 5 types of offering?
[burnt, flour/grain, peace, sin and trespass]
3. What does Burnt, grain and peace offering address?
[They address the sins that displease God, which is voluntary]
4. What is voluntary offering?
[Voluntary offerings made by fire as a sweet smelling aroma to the Lord.]
5. What does Sin and Trespass offerings address?
[They address death, which is mandatory.]
6. Where is the mandatory offering offered?
[Mandatory atonement for the sins of the offeror is offered outside the tabernacle.]
7. What does laying of the hand on the sacrifice mean?
[By placing of the hand, the sins are transferred from the offerer to the sacrifice.]
8. How did Christ prepare the Altar for His sacrifice?
[He carried the wood (Cross) of the burnt offering. The fire (His suffering) consumed the sacrifice on the altar (the sins of all generations).]
9. How is the Blood of the Eucharist related to the sacrifice?
[We take the blood of the sacrifice (Eucharist) and sprinkle it around the altar (our souls).]
10. How do we partake of Christ offering?
[Through our union with Christ (Eucharist) we become partakers of what Christ offered to the Father.]

The Law of Purification for Leprosy

BIBLE BASICS

What is Leprosy?

Leprosy in the modern medical sense usually refers to Hansen's disease, an infection caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* (and in some cases *M. lepromatosis*). It most often affects the skin and peripheral nerves, and it can also involve the eyes and the lining of the upper respiratory tract. When untreated, nerve damage can lead to loss of sensation, especially in the hands and feet. Because pain is not felt, repeated injuries and infections may occur, which can contribute over time to deformities and disability.

Hansen's disease typically develops slowly, and symptoms may take years to appear. In many parts of the world today, it is treatable, especially when detected early, and effective therapy can prevent severe complications. There is still dishonor and bias around the world towards lepers. In poorer areas of the world, they are still sequestered and victimized. In the ancient world, conditions identified as 'leprosy' were widely feared and often associated with uncleanness and exclusion.

In the Old Testament, "leprosy" (*ṣāra'at*) is used more broadly than modern medical leprosy. This is shown by the fact that Scripture applies the term not only to persons but also to garments and even to houses (e.g., "leprous" fabric or "leprous" houses in Leviticus 13–14). Therefore, when we read about "leprosy" in the biblical text, we should understand it as a category of ritual uncleanness associated with visible corruption or spreading defilement, rather than assuming it always refers to Hansen's disease.

Key Term: *ṣāra'at*
(often translated "leprosy")

A biblical category describing conditions of visible spreading corruption that render a person (or material object) ceremonially unclean and in need of priestly examination (Leviticus 13–14). It should not automatically be equated with Hansen's disease.

Because of this, the biblical laws concerning "leprosy" teach not only about physical sickness but also about holiness, uncleanness, and restoration. The ritual separation of the afflicted person from the camp highlights a spiritual truth that becomes clearer in the whole canon of Scripture: uncleanness alienates, but God provides a path of cleansing and return through His appointed means (Leviticus 13–14), ultimately fulfilled in Christ. To grasp the spiritual significance of the laws of purification in Leviticus, we must now turn from contemporary medical definitions to the biblical use

of leprosy as a category of ritual uncleanness, one that carries profound theological meaning within God's covenant relationship with His people.

Leprosy in the Bible

Beyond the body

The biblical understanding of leprosy is best grasped by observing how Scripture applies the term, rather than by attempting to define it abstractly.

First, leprosy is applied not only to persons but also to objects and spaces. In Leviticus 13–14, garments may be declared leprous, and in Leviticus 14:33–53, entire houses are examined for leprous contamination.

“If the plague is on the garment, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment... if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment... it is a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest.”

(Leviticus 13:47–49, NKJV)

“When you have come into the land of Canaan... and I put the leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession...”

(Leviticus 14:34, NKJV)

Since garments and buildings cannot contract disease in a medical sense, this usage demonstrates that biblical leprosy concerns visible corruption that spreads and defiles, not merely physical illness.

Outside the Camp

Second, those diagnosed with leprosy were required to live **outside the camp of Israel** until examined and declared clean by the priest.

“The leper who has the sore shall have his clothes torn and his head bare... He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.”

(Leviticus 13:45–46, NKJV)

This separation was not presented as a legal punishment or moral condemnation but as a ritual necessity. Israel was called to be a holy people, and anything identified as unclean, whether arising from disease, bodily discharge, or contact with death, temporarily disrupted participation in communal worship.

Restoration through priesthood, not just healing

Third, restoration from leprosy was never self-declared. Even when healing had clearly occurred, the individual could not return to the camp until the priest went out to examine him and perform the rites prescribed by the Law.

“This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp...”
(*Leviticus 14:2–3, NKJV*)

Cleansing was therefore not merely a matter of recovery, but of recognition, mediation, and restoration. Similarly, an individual fighting sin is only restored after confession, not simply conquering sin.

Ceasing corruption

The same pattern appears in the case of leprous houses. A house showing signs of corruption was emptied, examined, scraped, repaired, and re-examined. If the corruption persisted, the house was destroyed.

“Now if the plague comes back and breaks out in the house, after he has taken away the stones, after he has scraped the house, and after it is plastered, 44 then the priest shall come and look; and indeed if the plague has spread in the house, it is an active leprosy in the house. It is unclean. 45 And he shall break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them outside the city to an unclean place.”
(*Leviticus 14:43–45, NKJV*)

This process reveals that persistent defilement, if left untreated, leads not to coexistence but to removal for the sake of preserving holiness! Tertullian interprets this pattern as applying to the baptized believer who returns to former defilements, warning that unchecked corruption leads again to separation.

Psalm 1 reminds similarly of the progressive nature of sin:

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.” (*Psalm 1:1, NKJV*)

For this reason, the Bible repeatedly warns against unholy companionship and environments (2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 13:20). The Fathers also echo this concern, not out of fear, but out of realism regarding human weakness:

- “You despise gold; someone else loves it. You spurn wealth; he eagerly pursues it. You love silence, weakness and privacy. He takes delight in talking and effrontery in the public square, and streets, and apothecary shops.... Do not remain under the same roof with him. Do not rely on your past continence. You cannot be holier than David or wiser than Solomon....” St. Jerome

Tertullian

“But if [in a case of leprosy] after its rehabilitation and transformation, the priest again observes in that same house any of the old pocks or stains, may he pronounce it unclean and order its timbers and its stones and its whole structure to be torn down and cast forth into an unclean place. This is a type of the man, body and soul, who is transformed after baptism, that is to say, after the entrance of the priest, and then takes up once more the scabrous contaminations of the flesh. He is cast forth outside the city into an unclean place. That is to say, he is “given over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.””

- “The Lord teaches and admonishes that we must withdraw from such. “They are blinded guides of the blind. But if the blind man guide a blind man, both shall fall into a pit.” St. Cyprian
- “Paul sounds here like the father who asks a son who despises his parents and prefers wicked companions: “What are you doing? Do you not realize that you are much nobler and better than they are?” He will detach his son more easily from such people by appealing to his self-respect rather than by demeaning him. In the same way, Paul appeals to the Corinthians, not mentioning himself or God but appealing directly to their sense of who they are in themselves.” St. John Chrysostom

From these examples, we see leprosy represents a condition of spreading corruption that renders a person or place unfit for participation in the holy life of God’s people. Its defining feature is not pain or mortality, but defilement that expands if not addressed. For this reason, leprosy becomes a fitting image for the effects of sin, not because all sickness is caused by sin, but because sin, like leprosy, corrupts, isolates, and destroys communion if left untreated.

At the same time, the Law of Moses reveals God’s mercy. Provision is always made for examination, cleansing, and restoration. The leper is not abandoned but awaited. The priest does not remain distant; he goes out to meet the one who is separated. Through prescribed rites, the unclean may be declared clean and restored to life within the camp.

Cleansing a Leper

The law concerning the cleansing of a leper begins not inside the camp, but outside it. Once signs of healing appeared, the leper was brought to the priest, and the priest himself went out of the camp to examine him. The leper did not declare himself clean, nor did the community reintegrate him by consensus. Restoration required priestly examination and mediation.

“This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp. If the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop.”
(*Leviticus 14:2-4, NKJV*)

If the leprosy was found to be healed, the priest commanded that specific elements be brought: two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop (*Leviticus 14:4*). One bird was killed over running water in an earthen vessel; the other was dipped in the blood and released into the open field (*Leviticus 14:5–7*). Let us dive into the different ritual actions.

1. **Cleansing begins with divine initiative, not human assertion:** The priest goes out to the leper before the leper may return. This establishes that restoration flows from God toward the unclean, not the reverse.

What is hyssop?

Hyssop was a very sturdy but small plant, whose roots could penetrate rocks, representing the deep penetration of forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. “Though hyssop is a tiny plant, its roots are said to penetrate the heart of rocks. It is also known to be good for a person’s internal wounds. In *Leviticus* it was dipped in sacrificial blood and sprinkled seven times on the body of a leper, revealing by way of anticipation that inward stains of sins could be effectively removed by the precious blood of the Lord Savior.” Cassiodorus

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2. **Cleansing involves death and release:** One bird dies; the other lives and is set free. The ritual does not merely remove uncleanness; it marks a transition from death to life, from confinement to freedom. The leper does not simply return to his former state but passes through a rite that acknowledges what has been overcome.
 3. **Cleansing is not superficial:** the use of blood and water together reveals that cleansing is not superficial. Blood signifies life offered; water signifies washing and renewal. The combination teaches that purification requires both atonement and cleansing, not one without the other.
 4. **Cleansing is intentional:** The cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop are not incidental details. These elements recur in purification contexts throughout Scripture, indicating that cleansing is intentional, costly, and thorough, reaching what is defiled and restoring it to holiness.

When read in the light of the New Testament, this pattern prepares the reader to recognize Christ as the true and final High Priest. Just as the priest went outside the camp to examine the leper, so Christ suffered outside the gate to sanctify the people through His own blood.

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”

(Hebrews 13:12, NKJV)

The ritual does not replace Christ’s work; it **prefigures it**, teaching Israel how cleansing, mediation, and restoration truly occur.

The Living Bird

The ritual of the living bird is described in detail in Leviticus 14:5–7. One of the two clean birds is killed in an earthen vessel over running water. The living bird, together with the cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, is dipped in the blood of the slain bird mixed with the running water. After the leper is sprinkled seven times and declared clean, the living bird is released into the open field.

“And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.”

(Leviticus 14:5-7, NKJV)

Death in earthen vessel

The bird that is killed does not die on the ground or on an altar, but in an earthen vessel. The vessel contains the blood and water, holding together death and cleansing in a single act. The vessel itself is not preserved or exalted; it merely serves the rite and then passes out of view. This emphasizes that the instrument is temporary, while the effect of the rite endures.

Released through blood

The living bird does not remain untouched by death. It is fully dipped in the blood of the slain bird before it is released. The bird that lives passes through death symbolically before it is set free. Life follows participation in death; freedom follows contact with blood.

The release of the living bird is essential. The ritual would be incomplete without it. Cleansing does not end in containment or control but in restored freedom. The bird is not returned to the priest, the camp, or the leper. It is released into open space, signifying a genuine transition from confinement to life.

New life from death

The living bird represents new life emerging after death, not by avoiding death, but by passing through it. The leper's cleansing is not merely the removal of impurity; it is the granting of freedom that follows purification. The ritual therefore teaches that restoration requires both the ending of corruption and the beginning of a renewed way of life.

Washing Inside and Out: Ongoing Sanctification

After the ritual involving the birds, the Law does not immediately restore the cleansed leper to ordinary life. Instead, Leviticus 14:8–9 prescribes a process. The one being cleansed must wash his clothes, shave all his hair, and wash his body in water. He may then enter the camp but must remain outside his tent for seven days. On the seventh day, the washing and shaving are repeated before he is declared clean.

“He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days. But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.”

(Leviticus 14:8-9, NKJV)

The washing rites teach that purification initiates a life of ongoing sanctification. While uncleanness is addressed decisively, the reordering of life continues through obedience, discipline, and time. Cleansing is not only removal of defilement but the formation of a new way of living.

This pattern prepares us to understand the Christian life following baptism. Baptism truly cleanses, yet the baptized are called to continual renewal, putting away former ways, ordering conduct, and allowing grace to reshape both inward disposition and outward action. Sanctification is therefore neither self-achieved nor instantaneous. It is lived obedience flowing from an accomplished cleansing.

John of Damascus

“A first baptism was that of the flood [of Noah] that cut away of sin. A second was that by the [Red] Sea and the cloud, for the cloud is a symbol of the Spirit, while the sea is a symbol of the water. A third is that of the [Levitical] law, for every unclean person washed himself with water and also washed his garments and thus entered into the camp. A fourth is that of John, which was an introductory baptism leading those thus baptized to penance, so that they might believe in Christ.”

The Eighth Day: New Creation & Consecration

The final stage of the leper's purification occurs on the eighth day (Leviticus 14:10–13). On this day, the cleansed person brings offerings to the door of the tabernacle, where the priest presents both the man and the sacrifices before the LORD. Sin offering, trespass offering, grain offering, and oil are all involved, and the priest declares the offering “most holy.”

“And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil. Then the priest who makes him clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. Then he shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering, in a holy place; for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering. It is most holy.”
(Leviticus 14:10-13, NKJV)

The timing of this ritual is significant. Typically, the number seven signifies completion within the created order, marked by the seven days of creation. The eighth day, therefore, does not repeat the first cycle but opens a new one. It signifies a beginning that goes beyond ordinary time.

The leper has already been cleansed and reintroduced to the camp. The eighth-day offering does not remove uncleanness; it consecrates new life. What has been restored is now offered. What has been healed is now dedicated.

The presence of oil alongside sacrifice further clarifies the meaning. Oil in Scripture signifies anointing, consecration, and divine empowerment. The cleansed life is not merely accepted back into the community; it is set apart for God.

The Offering of Flour and Thanksgiving

Among the offerings brought on the eighth day is a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil (Leviticus 14:10). This offering is not concerned with the removal of sin, which has already been addressed, but with thanksgiving, consecration, and offering life back to God.

The presence of flour alongside sacrifice reveals that the pinnacle of the purification process is **eucharistic offering**, a grateful return of life to the Creator. What has been healed is now offered. What has been restored now gives thanks.

This understanding was already recognized by Justin Martyr, who writes:

“The offering of flour, which was ordered to be presented for those cleansed from leprosy, was a prototype of the eucharistic bread, which our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to offer in remembrance of the passion He endured for all those who are cleansed from sin... and at the same time we should thank God for having created the world and everything in it for the sake of humankind.”

The Law itself teaches: cleansing leads not only to restored standing, but to thankful participation in God's gifts. The eighth day therefore anticipates a life marked by eucharist: by remembrance, gratitude, and offering.

Senses, Deeds, and Way

In the rites of the eighth day, the priest applies both blood and oil to the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe of the cleansed person (Leviticus 14:14–18). These actions are deliberate and ordered.

“The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. Then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering. The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.”

(Leviticus 14:14-18, NKJV)

The ear signifies **hearing and obedience**.

The hand signifies **action and deeds**.

The foot signifies **direction and way of life**.

The blood is applied first, followed by the oil. This sequence reveals that cleansing precedes consecration. Forgiveness comes before calling. Healing comes before mission. Therefore,

- The blood cleanses the senses, our deeds, and our way.
- The oil consecrates the senses, our deeds, and our way to the Lord.

Nothing is left untouched. Salvation is not confined to the inner conscience alone, but extends to perception, action, and direction. The cleansed life is not merely forgiven; it is reordered.

Provision for the Poor

The Law makes explicit provision for those unable to afford the full offering (Leviticus 14:21–23). The required sacrifices are adjusted, not removed. The ritual remains the same in meaning, even when simplified in form.

“But if he is poor and cannot afford it, then he shall take one male lamb as a trespass offering to be waived, to make atonement for him, one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, a log of oil, and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford: one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. He shall bring them to the priest on the eighth day for his cleansing, to the door of the

tabernacle of meeting, before the LORD.”
(Leviticus 14:21-23, NKJV)

Access to cleansing is never limited by wealth, but responsibility is never removed by poverty. All are called to repentance, confession, and restoration. Rich and poor alike. We give according to what we have, those who have a lot are to give accordingly, those who have little, likewise are to give accordingly. This principle applies not just spiritually but materially as well.

Summary: From Leprosy to New Creation

The Law of Purification for Leprosy presents more than a ritual response to uncleanness. God restores, heals, and consecrates His people.

The process begins with recognition of corruption. Leprosy, whether in a person or a dwelling, is identified by its capacity to spread and defile. Separation follows, not as abandonment, but as protection, for both the afflicted and the community. Restoration begins when the priest goes out to the one who is separated. Cleansing is never self-declared. It is mediated, examined, and ordered according to God’s command.

The ritual of the birds reveals that cleansing requires death and release. One life is given; another passes through death and is set free. Cleansing ends corruption; release restores freedom. The former state is not repaired but decisively left behind. The Law then prescribes repeated washing and waiting. The cleansed person is neither returned instantly to ordinary life nor left in isolation. Instead, he undergoes a process that reforms habits, conduct, and orientation.

Washing inside and out teaches that purification initiates a life of sanctification, one marked by obedience, discipline, and patience. God restores fully, but He restores wisely. The process ends on the **eighth day**, a moment that does not repeat the old order but opens a new one. The cleansed life is now consecrated through sacrifice and anointing. What has been healed is offered. What has been restored is directed toward God.

Similarly, through the blood of Christ and repentance, confession, and communion, we are purified again. We must purify ourselves from the inside first through Repentance. Only then can the priest examine us and grant us absolution and penance to remove the roots. We must also cut ourselves away from evil environments which are not conducive to purity of heart and good works. There is always work needed in whatever accomplishment you aim. If you seek a psychiatrist, they will be the first to say, there is no quick fix. Even if they give medications, there will always be a part that is allocated to the individual for betterment. Likewise with our spiritual lives. There is no quick fix.



Review Questions

1. What does Leprosy represent Spiritually? (A: Spiritually it resembles sin, which corrupts the soul.)

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2. What does the 8th day represent in terms of cleansing of the Leper? (A: The 8th day represents the consecration of our new purified life to the Lord.)
 3. What does the blood represent? (A: The blood cleanses the senses, our deeds, and our way)
 4. What is the purpose of the oil when it comes to cleansing? (A: The oil consecrates our senses, our deeds, and our way to the Lord.)
 5. What can Leprosy of the body and environment do? (A: It can cause a rift between us and God. Leprosy correlates with sin infecting our soul while leprosy of the house is evil infecting our surroundings which can lead to leprosy of soul.)
 6. What must we do in order to keep good company and prevent us from being “infected” like the Lepers? (A: We must also cut ourselves away from evil environments which are not conducive to purity of heart and good works. There is always work needed in whatever accomplishment you aim.)

Christ in the Jewish Feasts

BIBLE BASICS

Fulfillment, Not Replacement

The New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament. Everything God did for the Jews in the Old Testament was preparing them for Christ's coming in the New Testament. To understand the New Testament and the significance of Christ's coming, we need to understand the Old Testament. "The New Testament is in the Old Testament Concealed and the Old Testament is in the New Testament Revealed."

This does not mean that the Old Testament was false or defective. It means that the realities signified in the Law and the Prophets—often in types and shadows—are made manifest in Christ. The same God who delivered Israel from Egypt has acted definitively in the death and resurrection of His Son. Therefore, Christian reading of the Old Testament is neither dismissal nor mere admiration, but recognition of **Christ-centered fulfillment**.

Sacred Time and the Number Seven

The Old Testament feasts are arranged within a sacred structure. A key feature of that structure is the pattern of **seven**, which appears throughout Scripture as a sign of completeness, fullness, and ordered holiness.

This pattern is visible in Israel:

- The Sabbath is on the **seventh day**, sanctifying time itself to God.
- Major feasts occur within the **seventh month**, intensifying holy remembrance and repentance.
- The Sabbatical year occurs every **seven years**, training Israel to rest, trust, and release.
- Pentecost is counted after **seven weeks**, signifying fullness before gift.
- The Jubilee follows **seven times seven years**, declaring release, restoration, and renewed life.

By shaping worship around this pattern, the Law teaches that time belongs to God. The feasts are not merely cultural traditions; they are **appointed times** that train the people in remembrance, purification, thanksgiving, and hope.

The Seven Feasts Jesus Celebrated

The Jewish feasts that Jesus Christ celebrated were:

- The Passover
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread

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- The Feast of First Fruits
 - The Feast of Pentecost
 - The Feast of Trumpets
 - The Day of Atonement
 - The Feast of Tabernacles

These feasts are not disconnected observances. Together they form a theological arc that moves from redemption to sanctification, from harvest to hope, and from atonement to God dwelling with His people. They teach Israel to expect that God will act again—more fully, more finally, and more universally—than He did in the Exodus.

Beginnings That Frame the Feasts

These feasts were preceded by 2 main events: Jewish New Year (Nisan 1 ~March 1) and the Cleansing and New Beginning.

1) The Tabernacle as the Center of Holy Time

When Israel is instructed to set up the tabernacle, it is established at the beginning of the first month, indicating that worship is not a private option but the organizing center of covenant life.

“On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.”
(Exodus 40:2, NKJV)

And when Moses completes the work, God confirms His presence:

“So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”
(Exodus 40:33–34, NKJV)

This teaches that Israel’s holy calendar is not merely seasonal. It is ordered around the presence of God. The feasts exist to preserve remembrance and holiness, but their deepest meaning is communion: God with His people.

2) Cleansing Before Renewed Worship

Holy celebration presupposes purification. When worship is restored, Scripture repeatedly shows cleansing and confession preceding renewed liturgical life. This is illustrated in Hezekiah’s restoration of temple worship, where sin offerings are brought and hands are laid upon them:

“Then they brought out the male goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly; and they laid their hands on them.”
(2 Chronicles 29:23, NKJV)

The principle is consistent: before God’s people gather and rejoice, corruption must be acknowledged and removed. Worship is not only joy; it is holiness.

The goal is not simply to memorize feast names and dates, but to understand how God used holy time to prepare His people for Christ—and how, through Christ, the Church now lives in fulfilled remembrance and watchful expectation.

The Passover: Redemption, Sacrifice, and New Beginning

[Nisan 14 // April]

The Passover as the Foundation of Israel's Sacred Memory

The Feast of Passover stands at the foundation of Israel's liturgical year. It commemorates God's act of deliverance, when Israel was freed from slavery in Egypt by the blood of the lamb and the power of God. This feast does not merely remember an event; it establishes a pattern of redemption unfolded progressively until its fulfillment in Christ.

God commands Israel:

“This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.”
(Exodus 12:2, NKJV)

Time itself is reordered around redemption. Israel's calendar no longer begins with nature or harvest, but with salvation. From this point forward, history is measured from deliverance.

Sanctification of the Passover Lamb

Before the lamb is sacrificed, it is set apart. The lamb is chosen days in advance, examined, and kept until the appointed time.

“Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.’”
(Exodus 12:3, 5, NKJV)

Sanctification precedes sacrifice. What will be offered must first be examined, chosen, and kept pure. This prepares Israel to understand that redemption is not accidental, but deliberate and costly.

This sanctification finds a striking parallel when Israel crosses the Jordan and enters the Promised Land under Joshua, renewing covenant life:

“Now Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.”
(Joshua 5:3, NKJV)

“And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.”
(Joshua 5:11, NKJV)

Redemption leads to covenant renewal, not autonomy.

Christ Our Passover: Cut Off for Us

The New Testament reveals that Christ is not merely associated with Passover, **He is the Passover Lamb**. His death occurs at the very hour when lambs are slain, and His offering fulfills what the feast had always proclaimed.

The prophet Daniel foretells the Messiah’s fate:

“And after the sixty-two weeks
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it shall be with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.”
(Daniel 9:26, NKJV)

Christ is “cut off,” not for His own sin, but for the redemption of others.

St. Paul the apostle proclaims this fulfillment plainly:

“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”
(1 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV)

Passover in the New Testament: The Last Supper and the Cross

On the night of Passover, Jesus celebrates the feast with His disciples—not to repeat it, but to transform it.

“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”
(Luke 22:19–20, NKJV)

Christ establishes a **New Covenant**, not sealed with the blood of lambs, but with His own blood.

The Epistle to the Hebrews interprets this moment definitively:

“Then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of

the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
(Hebrews 10:9–10, NKJV)

The sacrifice of Christ does not abolish Passover, it completes it.

Passover as a New Beginning

The Fathers of the Church emphasize that Passover signifies not only deliverance, but **renewal of creation itself**.

“In like manner also we can understand this statement: ‘This month shall be to you the beginning of months.’ This statement is to be interpreted in reference to time. There is reference to the pasch of the Lord, which is celebrated at the beginning of spring... Then there was the mild temperature of spring, a season suitable for all things.”

— St. Ambrose of Milan, *SIX DAYS OF CREATION* 1.4.13

“After having inflicted the Egyptians with many plagues, he led them out of Egypt in the month of flowers, when the most pleasant spring appears and the sadness of winter passes away.”

— Pseudo-Macarius, *HOMILY* 47.3

“This is the first month of the year. This brings joy to every creature... This is for Christians Xanthicus, the first month, the time of the resurrection in which their bodies will be glorified...”

— Pseudo-Macarius, *HOMILY* 5.9

Passover marks the transition from death to life, winter to spring, slavery to freedom. Christ’s death on the Cross likewise inaugurates a new beginning: liberation from sin and entry into resurrected life.

A Lamb from the Sheep or the Goats

The Law allows the Passover lamb to be taken from sheep or goats, a detail the Fathers interpret spiritually:

“The lamb... may be taken from either the sheep or the goats... In the house of the church, moreover, Christ is offered in a twofold manner: if we are just, we eat of the flesh of the lamb; if we are sinners and do penance, for us a goat is slain.”

— St. Jerome, *HOMILY* 91

“The lamb... should be taken from the sheep or from the goats—that is, from the righteous or the wicked.”

— St. Augustine, *AGAINST FAUSTUS* 22.64

Christ adapts Himself to the condition of those He saves, not changing His holiness, but meeting each person where repentance or righteousness is required.

The Sacrifice of the Lambs: Evening and Fulfillment

The lamb is sacrificed in the evening:

“Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.”
(Exodus 12:6, NKJV)

The Fathers see divine wisdom in this timing:

“You see Christ is not immolated except in perfect and full light.”
— St. Jerome, *HOMILIES ON THE PSALMS* 5

“Our Lord and Savior suffered his passion at the close of the ages.”
— St. Jerome, *HOMILY* 91

“It was fitting for Christ to offer the sacrifice in the evening of the day in order that the very hour might show the setting and evening of the world.”
— St. Cyprian, *LETTER* 63.16

“It was fitting for Christ to offer the sacrifice in the evening of the day in order that the very hour might show the setting and evening of the world as it is written in Exodus: “And the whole multitude of the children of Israel shall slaughter it in the evening.” And again in the Psalms: “The lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice.” But we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in the morning. *LETTER* 63.16. Exodus 12:6” St. Cyprian

Christ dies as the old age passes away, ushering in the dawn of the Kingdom.

The Command to Eat the Passover

The Passover is not completed merely by sacrifice or by the marking of blood. The Lord commands that the lamb must be eaten. Redemption is not only something that happens *for* the people of God; it is something into which they must actively enter.

“Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”
(Exodus 12:8, NKJV)

Eating the Passover is participation in redemption. Israel does not observe salvation from a distance; they consume what God has provided. This principle prepares the way for the New Testament understanding of communion, where salvation is not only proclaimed but received.

Roasted with Fire: Suffering and Fulfillment

The lamb is not eaten raw, nor boiled in water, but roasted with fire.

“Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails.”
(Exodus 12:9, NKJV)

Fire in Scripture signifies testing, judgment, and purification. The lamb passes through fire before it is eaten, teaching that redemption comes through suffering, not avoidance of it.

Origen warns against a purely literal or careless consumption of Scripture:

“One must not therefore eat the flesh of the lamb raw, as the slaves of the letter do in the manner of animals which are irrational and quite savage.”
— Origen, *COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN* 10.103–4

To eat the lamb “roasted with fire” is to receive the Word of God rightly—understood, tested, and transformed—rather than consumed superficially or distorted to suit comfort.

The Head, the Feet, and the Inner Organs

The lamb is eaten whole, not divided or selected according to preference. This wholeness becomes a key theological principle.

“You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.”
(Exodus 12:10, NKJV)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem interprets this wholeness Christologically:

“Being counted worthy to partake of the flesh of the spiritual Lamb, let us take the head with the feet, understanding the head as the divinity and the feet as the humanity.”
— St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *CATECHETICAL LECTURE* 12.1

St. Jerome adds a complementary interpretation:

“The head may be taken to signify spiritual understanding; the shanks, historical narrative; the inner organs are whatever lies hidden within the letter.”
— St. Jerome, *HOMILY* 91

Christ is not received in parts. To receive Him is to receive His divinity and humanity, His mystery and His history, His visible teaching and hidden depth.

Unleavened Bread: Purity and Separation from Sin

The Passover meal is eaten with unleavened bread. Leaven, which causes fermentation and swelling, becomes a scriptural image for corruption and sin.

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread... For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”
(Exodus 12:15, NKJV)

St. Paul applies this directly to our life:

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”
(1 Corinthians 5:7–8, NKJV)

Participation in Christ demands purification. Redemption is not permission to continue in corruption; it is liberation from it.

Bitter Herbs: Suffering, Repentance, and Healing

The Passover is not eaten with sweetness alone. Bitter herbs accompany the meal.

“With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”
(Exodus 12:8, NKJV)

Origen explains the necessity of bitterness in the journey of salvation:

“Nor is it possible to attain the promised land unless we pass through bitterness.”
— Origen, *HOMILIES ON NUMBERS 27.10*

He compares bitterness to medicine—unpleasant, yet healing. Repentance, discipline, trials, and self-denial are not obstacles to salvation but instruments through which God restores the soul.

“The end of this bitterness gains the sweetness of salvation for our soul.”
— Origen, *HOMILIES ON NUMBERS 27.10*

The Christian life does not deny suffering; it redeems it.

Daily Participation in the Lamb

Origen extends the Passover meal beyond a single night:

“Christians eat the flesh of the lamb every day, that is, they consume daily the flesh of the Word.”
— Origen, *HOMILIES ON GENESIS 10.3*

This daily eating points to continual communion—through Scripture, prayer, repentance, and especially the Eucharist. Salvation is not a single moment but a sustained life of participation in Christ.

Origen draws attention to the spiritual meaning of this command by comparing Scripture with Scripture:

“It is not insignificant that the divine word wants us to eat not yesterday’s meat, but always fresh and new... It prohibits yesterday’s meat.”
— Origen, *HOMILIES ON LEVITICUS* 5.8.2

He recalls the prophet Ezekiel’s response to God:

“Even yesterday’s meat never entered my mouth.”
(cf. Ezekiel 4:14, NKJV)

Origen explains that this is not dietary pride, but spiritual vigilance. Yesterday’s meat symbolizes stale understanding, mechanical religion, and worship divorced from living obedience. God does not desire remembered faith alone, but present communion.

Eating in Readiness: A People Prepared to Depart

Christian participation in Christ, especially in the Eucharist, demands attentiveness, repentance, and renewal. Communion cannot be treated as habit without preparation, nor truth as information without transformation.

The Passover meal is eaten standing, clothed, and prepared for movement.

“And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.”
(Exodus 12:11, NKJV)

This posture reveals that salvation is not an endpoint, but a passage. Israel eats while ready to leave Egypt. Redemption always precedes journey.

St. Cyril of Alexandria explains this readiness:

“For I affirm that it is the duty of those who are partakers of Christ to beware of a barren indolence... and to hasten besides with alacrity wherever the law of God leads them.”
— St. Cyril of Alexandria, *HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE* 92

To eat the Lamb is to commit oneself to obedience. Passover faith does not produce spiritual passivity, but active readiness to follow God wherever He leads.

The Feast of the Unleavened Bread: Purification, Separation, and Life Without Corruption

[Nisan 15-21 // April]

The Feast That Immediately Follows Redemption

The Feast of Unleavened Bread follows directly after the Passover. It is not optional, nor is it delayed. Redemption and purification are inseparable in God's economy. Having been delivered by the blood of the lamb, Israel is immediately commanded to remove leaven from their midst.

“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.”
(Leviticus 23:6–7, NKJV)

The feast lasts seven days, indicating a complete period of consecrated life. It teaches that freedom from slavery must be followed by transformation of daily conduct.

Unleavened Bread and the Haste of Obedience

The original context of the feast explains its urgency:

“And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.”
(Exodus 12:39, NKJV)

Israel leaves Egypt without delay. There is no time to allow fermentation, no time for compromise. Salvation demands decisiveness. Leaven, which requires time to work through dough, becomes an image of lingering attachment to Egypt.

The removal of leaven therefore signifies a clean break with former bondage.

Leaven as a Spiritual Image

In Scripture, leaven often symbolizes corruption, sin, or false teaching—not because leaven itself is evil, but because of its hidden, spreading nature.

The apostle Paul applies this image directly to the Christian life:

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”
(1 Corinthians 5:7–8, NKJV)

Paul does not spiritualize the feast away; he **extends it**. The Church keeps the feast by living a purified life grounded in truth and sincerity.

The Command to Remove Leaven Completely

The Law is explicit about the seriousness of this purification:

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”

(Exodus 12:15, NKJV)

“For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel.”

(Exodus 12:19, NKJV)

Leaven is not managed; it is removed. Partial obedience is not sufficient. God teaches Israel that holiness requires decisive separation from corruption.

Christ's Burial and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

In the New Testament, Christ's burial coincides with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Having taken away sin through His sacrificial death, His body rests in the tomb without corruption.

This fulfills the deeper meaning of the feast: sin has been removed, and death itself is being undone. The unleavened bread points to a life purified from decay—a life that will soon be revealed in resurrection.

Fulfillment in Christ and the Life of the Church

St. Athanasius interprets the feast through Christ:

“With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you.” Now that is a wonderful account, for a man might have seen them at that time girded as for a procession or a dance and going out with staves and sandals and unleavened bread. These things, which took place before in shadows, were typical anticipatory symbols. But now the truth has drawn near to us, “the image of the invisible God,” our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Light. Instead of a staff, he is our scepter; instead of unleavened bread, he is the bread which came down from heaven; who instead of sandals has furnished us with the preparation of the gospel. It is he who, to speak briefly, by all these means has guided us to his Father. And if enemies afflict us and persecute us, he again, instead of Moses, will encourage us with better words, saying, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the wicked one.” And if after we have passed over the Red Sea, heat should again vex us or some bitterness of the waters befall us, even then again the Lord will appear to us, imparting to us of his sweetness and his life-giving fountain, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.”

— St. Athanasius, *FESTAL LETTERS* 14.3

Christ does not merely teach purity; He becomes the Bread that sustains it. Life without leaven is not self-produced moralism, but participation in Christ Himself.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread thus instructs the Church that redemption must be followed by **repentance, confession, vigilance, and sincere living**. Freedom from Egypt is meaningless if Egypt is carried within.

The Feast of the First Fruits: Resurrection, Promise, and the Harvest to Come [Nisan 17 (April)]

The Offering of the First Fruits

The Feast of First Fruits marks the presentation of the earliest yield of the harvest to God. It is not an act of agricultural efficiency, but of faith. By offering the first, Israel acknowledges that the whole harvest belongs to God and that its completion depends upon His blessing.

“The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.”
(Exodus 23:19, NKJV)

This offering occurs at the beginning of the harvest season. What is given is not the abundance, but the beginning—the sign that more is to come.

Remembrance and New Life

On this feast, Israel recalled decisive moments of deliverance and renewal: the resting of Noah’s ark, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the eating of the first produce of the Promised Land.

“So the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month... And the children of Israel camped in Gilgal... Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover... And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.”
(Joshua 4:19; 5:10–11, NKJV)

These events teach that God brings His people through death into life, through wilderness into inheritance.

Christ the First Fruits of the Resurrection

The New Testament reveals the full meaning of this feast in the resurrection of Christ.

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
(1 Corinthians 15:20, NKJV)

Christ's resurrection is not an isolated miracle. It is the beginning of a greater harvest. Just as the first fruit guarantees the full yield, Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all who belong to Him.

Theological Meaning of "First Fruits"

The concept of first fruits explains the connection between Christ's resurrection and the future resurrection of believers. Resurrection is not merely survival after death, but the restoration of life in a transformed and glorified state.

A tree never bears only a single fruit. A tree may be fruitless, but if it bears fruit at all, that first fruit is never the last. One fruit appears first, and it is followed by many others in due season. The first fruit is therefore both a beginning and a promise. It reveals what the tree truly is and what it is capable of producing.

This is the meaning of Christ's resurrection for us. Christ is the first to rise from the dead, not as an isolated event, but as the beginning of a greater harvest. Because we have seen His resurrection, we know that resurrection is possible. Because He has risen, we have confidence that we too will rise. His resurrection is the guarantee and assurance of our own.

Christ rises not only *for Himself*, but *for us*. His risen body is the pledge that death has been defeated, not postponed.

Ecclesial and Sacramental Implications

The Feast of First Fruits teaches the Church to live in hope. Christians already belong to the resurrection, even while still living in a fallen world. The life of the Church is therefore shaped by anticipation, thanksgiving, and confidence in God's promise.

Christ's resurrection sanctifies time, creation, and the human body itself. The same body that was buried is raised in glory. The same will be true for those united to Him.

The Feast of Pentecost: Law, Spirit and Harvest of the Church

[6th of Sivan in the Hebrew calendar (May)]

The Feast Fifty Days After First Fruits

The Feast of Pentecost occurs fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits. The name *Pentecost* itself means "fiftieth." In Israel's life, this feast marked the completion of the grain harvest and was celebrated as a thanksgiving offering to God.

Pentecost is commanded in the Law:

“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.”

(Leviticus 23:15–16, NKJV)

The counting from Passover to Pentecost teaches that redemption unfolds toward fulfillment. Salvation initiates a journey that culminates in divine gift.

Pentecost and the Giving of the Law

In Jewish tradition, Pentecost also commemorated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Fifty days after Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, God revealed His will in commandments written on stone tablets.

This connection is not accidental. God first frees His people, then instructs them how to live as a redeemed community. Law follows liberation.

Pentecost Fulfilled in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Pentecost becomes the day on which the Law is no longer written on stone, but on human hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

(Acts 2:1–4, NKJV)

The descent of the Holy Spirit fulfills what Sinai foreshadowed. God does not merely instruct from above; He now indwells His people.

Pentecost as Harvest

Just as Pentecost celebrated the harvest of grain, the New Testament Pentecost marks the beginning of the harvest of souls.

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

(Acts 2:41, NKJV)

St. John Chrysostom explains the typology:

“Do you see the type? What is this Pentecost? The time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest and the fruits to be gathered. Look at the reality now, how the time has come to ply the sickle of the Word. The Spirit, keen-edged, came down in place of the sickle. For

hear the words of Christ, “Lift up your eyes and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.” And again, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” He himself, taking [our nature] as the first fruits, lifted it up high and he was himself the first to ply the sickle. For this reason he calls [the Word] also the Seed.””

— St. John Chrysostom, *HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES* 4

The Spirit descends not for private ecstasy, but for mission. The Church is born not in silence, but in proclamation.

Christ, the First Fruits and the Giver of the Spirit

St. Augustine connects Passover, Resurrection, and Pentecost:

“Fifty days are reckoned from the celebration of the Passover... Likewise, when fifty days had passed from the slaying and resurrection of him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, the finger of God, that is, the Holy Spirit filled the believers gathered in one place.”

— St. Augustine, *ON THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER* 16.28

Christ ascends, and the Spirit descends. What Christ accomplishes in His humanity, the Spirit applies to the Church.

Law Fulfilled by the Spirit

Pentecost reveals that obedience is no longer external compulsion but internal transformation.

The Spirit does not abolish the Law; He fulfills it by enabling what the Law commands. The same God who spoke at Sinai now speaks within the heart.

Thus, Pentecost completes the movement that began at Passover:

- Passover: deliverance from death
- Unleavened Bread: purification from corruption
- First Fruits: resurrection hope
- Pentecost: indwelling power and communal mission

The Feast of Trumpets: Remembrance, Proclamation and the Coming King [1st of Tishri (September)]

The Feast That Announces and Awakens

The Feast of Trumpets marks the beginning of the seventh month and serves as a solemn call to remembrance, repentance, and expectation. Unlike other feasts that commemorate past acts of

deliverance, this feast looks forward. It awakens the people of God to judgment, kingship, and the nearness of divine intervention.

The Law commands:

“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.”
(Leviticus 23:24, NKJV)

The trumpet blast is not music for celebration alone; it is an alarm, a summons, and a proclamation. It gathers the people before God and announces that sacred time has begun.

The Shofar: Sound of Kingship and Judgment

The trumpet blown at this feast is the **shofar**, made from a ram’s horn. In Scripture, the shofar is associated with theophany, kingship, warfare, and judgment.

At Sinai, God’s presence is announced with trumpet sound:

“And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.”
(Exodus 19:16, NKJV)

The Feast of Trumpets thus recalls Sinai while also preparing Israel for a future manifestation of God’s glory.

A Day of Remembrance and Judgment

In Jewish life, this feast came to be known as the Day of Remembrance and the Day of Judgment. The people are called to reflect on their lives, examine their faithfulness, and prepare for the Day of Atonement that follows.

This teaches a crucial spiritual principle: **repentance precedes atonement**. The trumpet awakens conscience before forgiveness is sealed.

Christ and the Feast of Trumpets in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the Feast of Trumpets finds its fulfillment not in Christ’s first coming, but in anticipation of His second coming. The trumpet becomes the sound that announces the return of the King and the final judgment.

Christ Himself teaches this:

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with

power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

(Matthew 24:30–31, NKJV)

The apostle Paul echoes this reality:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:16, NKJV)

The trumpet that once called Israel to assemble now calls all creation to resurrection and judgment.

Christ Reveals Himself as the Anointed One

During His earthly ministry, Christ publicly identifies Himself as the Messiah in a synagogue setting connected to prophetic proclamation:

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read... And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’”

(Luke 4:16–21, NKJV)

St. Cyril of Alexandria explains the significance of this moment:

“By these words he himself tells us very clearly by the voice of the prophet that he would both be made man and come to save the world.”

— St. Cyril of Alexandria, *COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 12.6*

The Feast of Trumpets thus teaches that proclamation precedes fulfillment. God announces before He acts, so that His people may recognize Him when He comes.

Ecclesial Meaning: A Church That Watches and Proclaims

The Church lives perpetually in the spiritual season of the Feast of Trumpets. She proclaims repentance, announces the Kingdom, and watches for the return of Christ.

The trumpet sound becomes the voice of preaching, calling the faithful to vigilance and holiness.

The Church does not predict dates, but she does prepare hearts.

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): Entrance, Blood and Reconciliation [10th of Tishri (September)]

The Holiest Day of the Year

The Day of Atonement, known in Hebrew as **Yom Kippur**, stands at the center of Israel's liturgical year. It is the most solemn day, the day on which reconciliation between God and His people is enacted through blood, priesthood, and divine mercy.

The Law establishes its gravity:

“Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.”

(Leviticus 23:27, NKJV)

Unlike other feasts marked by joy or thanksgiving, this day is marked by fasting, humility, and repentance. Israel does not celebrate; Israel stands before God seeking mercy.

The High Priest and the Holy of Holies

On this day alone, and only on this day, the High Priest enters the **Holy of Holies**, the innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle or Temple. No other person may enter. No other day permits access.

“But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance.”

(Hebrews 9:7, NKJV)

The priest does not enter empty-handed. Blood must be brought with him. Without blood, entry means death.

The Sprinkling of Blood: Godward and Manward

The High Priest sprinkles blood in two directions:

- **One time upon the mercy seat** (Godward)
- **Seven times before the mercy seat** (toward the people)

This action teaches that atonement reconciles both parties. Sin offends God and wounds humanity. Blood restores communion in both directions.

The blood does not remove sin by human effort; it covers sin by divine appointment.

The Two Goats: Death and Removal

Central to Yom Kippur are **two goats**, each revealing a different aspect of atonement.

The Goat for the LORD

One goat is slain, and its blood is brought into the Holy of Holies. This goat bears death.

The Scapegoat (Azazel)

The second goat remains alive. The High Priest lays hands upon it and confesses the sins of Israel over it.

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel... and send it away into the wilderness.”
(Leviticus 16:21, NKJV)

This goat does not die in the sanctuary. It is **removed**, carrying sin away from the people.

Together, the two goats teach that sin must be both **atoned for** and **removed**.

Fulfillment in Christ

The Day of Atonement finds its complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

He is:

- The **High Priest**
- The **Sacrifice**
- The **Bearer of Sin**
- The **One who enters the true Holy of Holies**

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”
(Hebrews 9:12, NKJV)

Christ does not repeat the ritual yearly. He accomplishes it once and forever.

Jubilee and the Mystery of Fifty

Every fiftieth year, the Day of Atonement initiates the **Year of Jubilee**.

“Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.”
(Leviticus 25:9, NKJV)

Debts are forgiven. Slaves are freed. Land is restored.

St. Basil the Great explains the theological meaning:

“Seven weeks of years in ancient times produced the celebrated jubilee, in which the earth kept the sabbath, debts were canceled, slaves were set free and, as it were, a new

life was established again...”

— St. Basil the Great, *LETTER 260*

The Jubilee prefigures the final restoration of all things in Christ.

Psalm 50 and the Mystery of Remission

Cassiodorus links the Day of Atonement, Jubilee, and Pentecost:

“So too this psalm, which is given the number 50, if recited with a pure heart, looses sins, cancels the bond of our debt and, like the year of remission, frees us through the Lord’s kindness of the debts of our sins.”

— Cassiodorus, *EXPOSITION OF THE PSALMS 50*

Forgiveness is not denial of justice. It is justice fulfilled through mercy.

The Feast of Tabernacles: Dwelling, Ingathering and God with us [15th of Tishri (September/October)]

The Feast of Dwelling

The Feast of Tabernacles is the final and most joyful feast of the Jewish liturgical year. Coming five days after the Day of Atonement, it proclaims that **atonement leads to communion**, and forgiveness leads to dwelling in God’s presence.

The Law commands:

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD... You shall dwell in booths for seven days... that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.’ ”

(Leviticus 23:34, 42–43, NKJV)

This feast commemorates Israel’s wilderness journey, when God dwelt among His people as they lived in temporary dwellings. The booths (sukkoth) remind Israel that their security does not come from permanent structures, but from the presence of God.

Ingathering and Completion

Tabernacles is also called the **Feast of Ingathering**.

“And the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.”
(Exodus 23:16, NKJV)

This feast celebrates the completion of the harvest. It marks fullness, abundance, and thanksgiving. Spiritually, it teaches that God’s redemptive work moves toward fulfillment, not fragmentation.

The number seven dominates the feast: seven days of celebration in the seventh month. This signifies completeness within God’s covenantal order.

Sacrifice, Trumpets, and Light

During the Feast of Tabernacles, sacrifices were offered daily, trumpets were blown, and the Temple was filled with light. According to Numbers 29, a total of **seventy bulls** were sacrificed over the course of the feast, a number traditionally associated with the nations of the world. This anticipates the universal scope of salvation.

Zechariah’s prophecy is read in the synagogues:

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.”
(Zechariah 14:16, NKJV)

Tabernacles thus looks beyond Israel to the final ingathering of all nations.

Christ and the Feast of Tabernacles

The Gospel of John deliberately situates Christ’s teaching within the context of this feast:

“Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand... Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught... On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’ ”
(John 7:2, 14, 37, NKJV)

Christ identifies Himself as the fulfillment of what Tabernacles signifies. He is the true source of living water, replacing the ceremonial water-pouring rites of the feast.

John explains:

“But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”
(John 7:39, NKJV)

Christ does not merely commemorate God dwelling with Israel—He is **God dwelling with humanity**.

Patristic Interpretation: The Final Gathering

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes:

“The spiritual person will from this perceive the gathering together of all the saints into Christ when they shall be brought together from the whole world after the resurrection of the dead to the city that is above, the heavenly Jerusalem...”

— *COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 3.4*

The temporary booths anticipate glorified bodies. What was once fragile becomes permanent. What was once shadow becomes reality.

Eschatological Fulfillment

The Feast of Tabernacles ultimately points forward to the consummation of salvation history.

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.”

(Revelation 21:3, NKJV)

Here the feast reaches its final fulfillment. God no longer dwells with His people in tents or temples, but eternally.

Christ and Salvation in the Old Testament

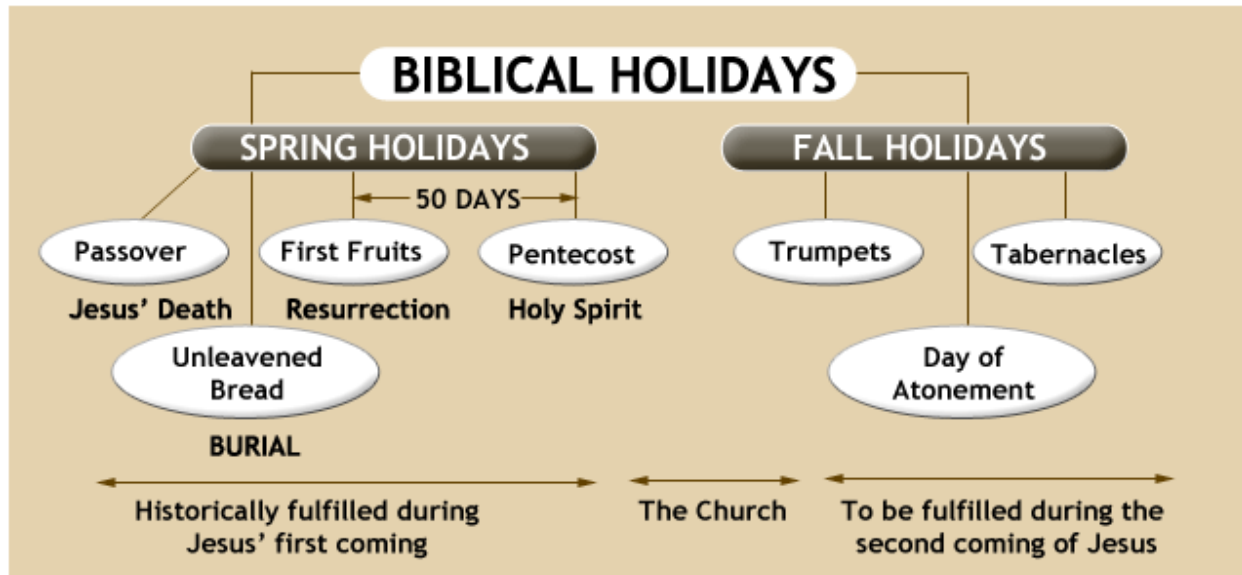
The cycle of feasts reveals a coherent and intentional plan:

- **Passover** — redemption through sacrifice
- **Unleavened Bread** — purification from sin
- **First Fruits** — resurrection and promise
- **Pentecost** — the gift of the Spirit
- **Trumpets** — proclamation and judgment
- **Atonement** — reconciliation and forgiveness
- **Tabernacles** — God dwelling with His people

The Old Testament does not merely predict Christ; it **forms a plan of salvation** that Christ fulfills perfectly. The Law prepares, the feasts proclaim, and Christ completes.

Thus, we confess with the Church:

The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.



Review Questions

1. What were the Jewish Feasts that Jesus Christ celebrated? (A: The Passover, The feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of First Fruits, The Feast of Pentecost, The Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, The Feast of Tabernacles.)
2. How is the Passover celebrated differently in the New Testament? (A: He celebrates on Thursday but the 14th of Nisan is Friday which is the day where everybody prepares their lamb for the Passover meal Friday night. Christ died in the evening on Friday with the other lambs slaughtered for the Jewish Passover. Fulfilling the prophecy that He is the last sacrifice.)
3. What does the Feast of Unleavened Bread represent in the New Testament? (A: Feast of Unleavened Bread in the NT Leaven = sin. After Christ died, He took away our sin hence bread with leaven, the same way He freed the Jews from the sins of Egypt. So Christ's burial and Resurrection coincide with the feast of Unleavened Bread, A Feast to the Lord.)
4. What do the Jewish people remember on The Feast of the First Fruits-Celebrated on Nisan 17? (A: On this same feast, the Jews remembered Noah's Ark resting on Mount Ararat, Israel crossing the Red Sea, Eating the first fruits of the promised land)
5. The Feast of Pentecost takes place after how many days after the Feast of First Fruits? (A: 50 days after, Pentecost means 50)
6. What do the Jews celebrate on the Feast of Pentecost? (A: The Jews used this feast as thanksgiving for the harvest. On this day the Jews commemorated God giving Moses the Law on Mount Sinai, King David's birth and death, Enoch being taken up to heaven.)
7. In the New Testament, what is celebrated in the Feast of Pentecost? (A: It is a

celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Christ is taken up into heaven (Enoch) and now this law is written in our hearts by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us (Receiving the law on tablets). Just as Jews celebrate the harvest of crops, so the Christians celebrate the harvest of believers that were added to the faith on and after Pentecost through the work and grace of the Holy Spirit.)

8. What is the Holiest day of the year for religious Jews? (A: The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur which is Celebrated on the 10th of Tishri in September)

Symbols and Prophecies about the Holy Cross

BIBLE BASICS

Symbols and Prophecies of the Holy Cross

“ O the divine mystery of that cross! Weakness hangs on it, power is freed by it, evil is nailed to it, and triumphal trophies are raised toward it.”

— St. Ambrose

The Holy Cross is not merely an event in history, nor only an instrument of Roman execution. It is a divine mystery at the heart of God’s saving work. What the world counted as shame, God revealed as victory. What appeared as weakness became the liberation of power; what appeared as defeat became the overthrow of evil.

St. John Chrysostom speaks of this wonder with striking boldness:

“if one were to ask me what was the most admirable thing that Christ did, I would out aside the heaven, the earth, the sea, the resurrection of the multitude of dead and all the other miracles, and I would display only the Cross which is the most glorious of all.”

The Cross is therefore not secondary to Christ’s miracles. It is the summit of His saving mission. From the fall of Adam and Eve, the divine plan of redemption moves steadily toward this point: God will heal humanity through the very means by which humanity is restored—through obedience, sacrifice, and life given unto death. For this reason, the Old Testament is filled with images that prepare the mind and heart to recognize the Cross when it finally appears in the fullness of time.

The Cross Foretold in Scripture

The Old Testament consistently prepares the people of God for a salvation that would come through suffering, obedience, and sacrificial love. Long before Christ’s crucifixion, Scripture speaks of a righteous sufferer who would bear the sins of many.

The prophet Isaiah declares:

“He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.”
(*Isaiah 53:5, NKJV*)

Likewise, the psalmist prophetically describes the crucifixion centuries before it occurred:

“They pierced My hands and My feet...
I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint.”
(*Psalms 22:16, 14, NKJV*)

These texts reveal that suffering was not accidental to salvation but essential to it. The Cross was the means by which God’s justice and mercy would meet.

The Cross as Victory, Not Defeat

Although Christ’s death appeared to be a moment of weakness, the Church proclaims it as the supreme manifestation of divine power. As St. Ambrose teaches, weakness hangs upon the Cross, yet power is released through it. Evil is nailed to it, not victorious over it, and the Cross becomes a trophy of triumph rather than a sign of loss.

Christ willingly embraced the Cross, not as a victim overtaken by circumstances, but as the obedient Son fulfilling the will of the Father:

“Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.”
(*Hebrews 10:9, NKJV*)

Through this obedience, Christ overturned Adam’s disobedience. Where the first Adam fell through a tree, the last Adam brought life through the Tree of the Cross.

The Cross as the Center of Christian Faith

For this reason, the Cross is not merely a historical reminder of Christ’s death, nor simply a religious symbol. It is the heart of Christian faith and life. From it flows forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, and resurrection. Through it, death is defeated by death, and life is restored to the world.

The Church therefore does not preach Christ apart from the Cross, nor the Cross apart from Christ. To behold the Cross is to behold the mystery of God’s love revealed in suffering, humility, and self-giving sacrifice.

In the sections that follow, we will examine specific Old Testament symbols—trees, wood, rods, sacrifices, and signs—that foreshadow the Cross and reveal how deeply it is woven into the fabric of God’s saving work from the beginning.

The Tree of Life

At the very beginning of human history, Scripture places a tree at the center of God's relationship with humanity. In the Garden of Eden stood the Tree of Life, a source of immortality and communion with God. Yet Adam and Eve did not eat from this tree. Instead, they chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and through that choice, corruption, death, and separation entered the human condition.

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

(Genesis 3:22–24, NKJV)

The expulsion from Eden was not an act of cruelty, but of mercy. Humanity, now corrupted by sin, could not be permitted to live forever in a fallen state. Eternal life had to be restored only after humanity itself was healed and renewed. For this reason, access to the Tree of Life was barred until redemption could be accomplished.

From the Tree of Death to the Tree of Life

The Fathers of the Church consistently interpret the Tree of Life as a type of the Cross. Humanity fell through a tree; humanity would be saved through a tree. What was lost by disobedience would be restored through obedience. What brought death would be answered by that which brings life.

The Cross becomes the new Tree of Life, planted not in Eden, but on Golgotha. From it flows eternal life, not by preserving fallen humanity, but by renewing it. Christ does not simply reopen the gates of Eden; He recreates humanity itself.

Through the Cross, the corruption introduced by Adam is healed. Through the Cross, immortality is restored, not as endless fallen existence, but as glorified life in communion with God.

Renewal Before Immortality

The guarding of the Tree of Life by cherubim and a flaming sword teaches an essential theological truth: eternal life cannot be granted apart from transformation. Humanity must first be renewed before it can live forever. This renewal takes place through Christ's death and resurrection.

The Cross, therefore, is not merely the means by which sins are forgiven; it is the instrument through which human nature itself is healed. Only after passing through death with Christ can humanity receive life with Christ.

In the New Testament, this truth is made explicit. Access to life is restored not by returning to Eden, but by union with Christ:

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.”

(John 3:36, NKJV)

Thus, the Tree of Life that was once guarded now stands open to all—not in a garden, but in the Church; not as a fruit taken by the hand, but as a life received through the Cross and sealed in the resurrection.

The Cross is the Tree of Life made visible in history, the fulfillment of what Eden promised and what humanity lost.

Noah’s Ark and the Wood of Salvation

The Fathers of the Church consistently recognized Noah’s Ark as a type of the Cross and of the salvation accomplished through Christ. Just as the ark was constructed of wood and bore humanity safely through the waters of judgment, so the Cross, also made of wood, bears humanity through death into life.

Salvation Through the Wood

The flood was not merely a natural disaster; it was a divine judgment upon a world corrupted by sin. Yet within that judgment, God prepared mercy. The ark did not remove the flood, but it carried the faithful through it. In the same way, the Cross does not eliminate death immediately, but it transforms death into the passage to life.

Those who entered the ark were saved not because of their strength or wisdom, but because they trusted God’s word and entered the place He had prepared. Likewise, salvation in Christ is not achieved by human effort, but by entering into the life, death, and resurrection of the One whom God has provided.

Covenant and Preservation of Life

God’s covenant with Noah reveals another essential aspect of salvation. The ark was not for Noah alone, but for his household and for all living creatures. Salvation was communal and cosmic in scope. This anticipates the work of Christ, whose salvation extends not only to individuals, but to the renewal of all creation.

The pitch that covered the ark inside and out sealed it against the waters of destruction. The Fathers often see in this a figure of Christ’s blood, which covers and protects those who belong to Him. Just as the ark floated above the waters of judgment, so those who are united to Christ are carried through death into resurrection.

The Ark as a Type of the Church

The Church herself is often identified as the ark of salvation. Within her, humanity is preserved from the flood of sin and death, not by isolation from the world, but by faithful obedience to God's saving plan. As there was one ark and one door, so there is one Christ, one faith, and one baptism.

Noah's Ark thus proclaims a central truth of salvation history: God saves through obedience, through covenant, and through the wood He has chosen. The ark of wood prepares the way for the Cross of wood, through which God brings salvation not from water alone, but from death itself.

Isaac, the Beloved Son, and the Sacrifice Foretold

The offering of Isaac is one of the clearest prophetic patterns of the salvation plan. Abraham is commanded to offer his beloved son, and Isaac obeys without resistance. The scene is marked by details that resonate deeply with the Gospel.

Isaac was not merely Abraham's son; he was his only beloved son, the child of promise through whom God had vowed to bless the nations. Yet God commanded Abraham to offer this very son as a sacrifice.

"So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

(Genesis 22:6–10, NKJV)

The Father Who Offers and the Son Who Obeys

In this account, Abraham acts as a figure of God the Father. He does not offer a stranger or a servant, but his own beloved son. His obedience is voluntary, costly, and complete. This anticipates the Father's offering of His only begotten Son for the life of the world.

Isaac, for his part, is not portrayed as a helpless child. He carries the wood upon his own shoulders, ascends the mountain willingly, and submits to his father without resistance. His obedience prefigures the obedience of Christ, who carried His Cross and offered Himself freely:

"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

(Philippians 2:8, NKJV)

"God Will Provide for Himself the Lamb"

Isaac's question—"Where is the lamb?"—is among the most significant in all of Scripture. Abraham's reply, "God will provide for Himself the lamb," is not only a statement of faith but a prophecy. On

Mount Moriah, God indeed provided a ram to take Isaac's place. Yet this provision pointed forward to a greater fulfillment.

In Christ, God provides not a substitute animal, but His own Son as the true Lamb. Isaac is spared; Christ is not. What was withheld from Abraham is fulfilled by God Himself.

From Moriah to Golgotha

The location of Isaac's offering is traditionally associated with the region that would later become Jerusalem. Thus, the sacrifice of Isaac prophetically anticipates the sacrifice of Christ in both meaning and place. Isaac's release from death foreshadows resurrection, just as Christ's resurrection follows His true sacrifice.

The Epistle to the Hebrews reflects on Abraham's faith in this event:

"Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."

(Hebrews 11:19, NKJV)

The story of Isaac reveals that the Cross was not an unexpected interruption in God's plan, but its intended fulfillment. The Father offers, the Son obeys, and God provides salvation—not by sparing Himself, but by giving Himself.

The Rod of Aaron: Life from What Is Dead

Aaron's rod appears repeatedly as a sign of divine authority, victory over evil, and life from death.

"the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.' " So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods."

(Exodus 7:8–12, NKJV)

The rod triumphs not by imitation, but by swallowing the counterfeit. This becomes an image of the Cross: not merely matching evil, but overcoming it.

Later, God confirms Aaron's priesthood through the miracle of life springing from what is dead:

" Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod. And the Lord said to Moses, 'Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a

sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.”
(Numbers 17:8–10, NKJV)

A dead staff blossoms. This is a sign of resurrection life. It teaches that God’s chosen priesthood is not based on human ambition but divine appointment—and it anticipates the true Priest whose death becomes life for the world.

The Rod of Moses

The rod of Aaron is another powerful Old Testament sign that points directly to the mystery of the Cross. In multiple moments of Israel’s history, this simple wooden staff becomes an instrument through which God reveals His authority, His chosen priesthood, and His power to bring life out of death.

The Rod That Swallowed the Serpents

When Pharaoh demanded a sign, God instructed Moses and Aaron to demonstrate His power before the ruler of Egypt.

“The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, “Show a miracle for yourselves,” then you shall say to Aaron, “Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.”’ So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the LORD commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.”

(Exodus 7:8–12, NKJV)

Here, the rod becomes a sign of divine authority. Although the Egyptian magicians imitate the miracle, their power is ultimately overcome. Aaron’s rod consumes the others, revealing that God’s power does not merely compete with false powers—it triumphs over them.

The Fathers saw in this event a figure of the Cross, which would appear weak in the eyes of the world, yet would ultimately swallow up sin, death, and the dominion of the enemy.

The Rod That Blossomed

Later, during the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the Israelites questioned Aaron’s priesthood. God answered not with argument, but with a sign of life.

“Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Bring Aaron’s rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a

sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.”
(Numbers 17:8–10, NKJV)

A dry, lifeless staff—cut off from root and soil—suddenly produces buds, blossoms, and fruit. Life emerges where life is naturally impossible. This miracle confirms Aaron’s priesthood, but it also reveals a deeper truth: God brings life out of death.

The Cross and the True Priesthood

The rod of Aaron prefigures Christ in two profound ways. First, it points to Christ as the true and eternal High Priest, chosen not by human appointment but by divine will. Second, it reveals that life flows from what appears dead.

The Cross, like Aaron’s rod, is made of wood. It appears lifeless, cursed, and powerless. Yet from it flows resurrection, forgiveness, and eternal life. As Aaron’s rod was placed before the Testimony as a sign, so the Cross stands at the center of the Church as the sign of Christ’s priesthood and victory.

What the rod accomplished temporarily, the Cross accomplishes eternally. From death comes life; from obedience comes glory; from the wood comes salvation.

The Rod That Opened the Sea

At the edge of the Red Sea, Israel stood trapped between the waters and the pursuing Egyptian army. Deliverance appeared impossible. Yet God commanded Moses to lift up his rod.

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.’”

(Exodus 14:15–18, NKJV)

The raised rod opens a path where none existed. Israel passes through the waters unharmed, while the forces of death are destroyed behind them. The Church has always seen in this event an image of baptism and of the Cross. Through the Cross, Christ opens a passage through death itself, allowing His people to pass from slavery to freedom, from death to life.

The Rod That Struck the Rock

Later, in the wilderness, the people again faced death—this time from thirst. Once more, God commanded Moses to act through the rod.

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock,

and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’ And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

(Exodus 17:5–6, NKJV)

From a struck rock flows living water, sustaining the people in the desert. The Apostle Paul makes the meaning of this sign explicit:

“For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 10:4, NKJV)

The striking of the rock points directly to Christ struck upon the Cross, from whose side flowed blood and water. What Moses accomplished in figure, Christ fulfills in reality.

The Cross as the True Rod of Power

The rod of Moses reveals a consistent pattern: God saves not through human strength, but through obedience to His command. The rod itself has no power apart from God’s will. In the same way, the Cross appears powerless in the eyes of the world, yet it becomes the instrument through which God defeats sin and death.

Through the rod, the sea is opened. Through the Cross, the grave is opened. Through the rod, water flows from the rock. Through the Cross, the Spirit is poured out upon the world.

Thus, the rod of Moses prepares us to understand the Cross not as an object of shame, but as the means by which God reveals His glory and grants life to His people.

In the Wilderness: Healing, Victory, and the Cross Lifted Up

As Israel journeyed through the wilderness, God continued to reveal His plan of salvation through concrete events that carried deep symbolic meaning. These moments were not random acts of provision; they were signs that taught Israel—and later the Church—how salvation would come through suffering transformed by obedience and faith. Again and again, wood, elevation, and divine intervention appear, preparing the people to recognize the mystery of the Cross.

Bitter Waters Made Sweet

Soon after crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites found themselves without water. When they finally reached water at Marah, it was bitter and undrinkable. The people complained, and Moses cried out to the Lord.

“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he

cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”
(*Exodus 15:22–25, NKJV*)

The Fathers saw in this event a clear figure of the Cross. The bitter waters represent the fallen condition of the world and the bitterness of life under sin. The tree, cast into the waters, transforms what is undrinkable into a source of life. In the same way, the Cross transforms suffering, death, and corruption into healing and salvation. What is bitter is not removed, but changed.

Victory Through Uplifted Hands

Another striking image appears in Israel’s battle against Amalek. Joshua fought on the battlefield, while Moses ascended a hill to pray.

“Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.’ So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”
(*Exodus 17:8–13, NKJV*)

Moses, standing with uplifted arms, forms the shape of the Cross. Israel’s victory does not depend merely on military strength, but on intercession and endurance. When the hands remain lifted, victory is assured; when they fall, defeat follows. This foreshadows Christ lifted up on the Cross, whose outstretched arms bring victory over the enemy. The support of Aaron and Hur reveals the communal nature of salvation—victory is sustained through shared faith and perseverance.

The Bronze Serpent Lifted Up

Perhaps the most explicit Old Testament image of the Cross is the bronze serpent.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”
(*Numbers 21:8–9, NKJV*)

The people were dying from the venom of serpents, the very image of sin and death. God did not remove the serpents immediately, but He provided a means of healing. The serpent lifted up on a pole becomes the instrument of life. Those who look upon it in faith are healed.

Christ Himself directly identifies this event with His crucifixion:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
(John 3:14–15, NKJV)

The Cross becomes the place where sin is exposed and defeated. Death is not ignored; it is confronted and overcome.

The Cross Revealed Through the Journey

In the wilderness, Israel learns that salvation comes not by avoiding suffering, but by trusting God within it. Bitter waters are healed by a tree. Victory is secured by uplifted hands. Death is overcome by looking upon what is lifted up. Each sign prepares the people to understand the Cross—not as a scandal, but as God’s chosen means of healing and life.

The Cross Foretold from the Beginning

The Old Testament is filled with signs, images, and events that quietly but consistently point toward the Holy Cross. These are not isolated coincidences, nor later interpretations imposed upon the text. Rather, they reveal that the Cross was woven into God’s plan of salvation from the very beginning, long before it was revealed openly in history.

From Eden onward, salvation is repeatedly shown to come through wood, obedience, sacrifice, and divine intervention. Humanity falls through a tree, and humanity is restored through a tree. Death enters through disobedience, and life is restored through obedience. What is lost through grasping is regained through self-giving love.

Prophetic Actions of the Prophets

Even the actions of the prophets themselves bear the imprint of the Cross. Elijah and Elisha both raised dead children by stretching themselves upon them, body to body, in a manner the Fathers recognized as forming the sign of the Cross. Life is restored not by words alone, but through bodily self-giving and intercession.

These acts foreshadow the One who would stretch Himself upon the wood of the Cross to restore life to the dead—not temporarily, but eternally.

The Cross as God’s Chosen Means

Throughout the Old Testament, God repeatedly teaches His people that salvation does not come through power, strength, or human wisdom. It comes through trust, obedience, and what appears weak in the eyes of the world. A staff defeats armies. A tree heals bitter waters. A lifted serpent heals the dying. A wooden ark saves from judgment. A beloved son carries wood to his own offering.

Each of these prepares the people of God to recognize Christ crucified—not as a failure, but as the fulfillment of everything God had been revealing all along.

Fulfillment in Christ

When Christ is finally lifted up on the Cross, all these signs converge. The wood, the lifting up, the blood, the obedience, and the victory over death are no longer symbols but realities. What was once hidden in type is now revealed in truth.

The Cross is therefore not an interruption in salvation history but its center. It is the key by which Scripture is unlocked, the point at which prophecy becomes fulfillment, and the means through which God reconciles the world to Himself.

As the Church proclaims, the Cross is at once suffering and glory, judgment and mercy, death and life. What God revealed in shadows through the Old Testament, He has now revealed fully in His Son.

In beholding the Cross, we behold the wisdom of God—foretold from the beginning, revealed in Christ, and offered to the world for the salvation of all.



Review Questions

1. Why did God kick Adam & Eve out of Paradise? (so they won't eat from the tree of life)
2. What type of wood was Noah's ark made out of? (Gopherwood)
3. What did Isaac carry up the mountain? (The wood for the offering)
4. Who's rod turned into a serpent? (Aaron's Rod)
5. Other than flowers, what else did Aaron's rod grow? (Almond buds)
6. What did God tell Moses to do to split the red sea? (strike the water with his rod)
7. What was the name of the place where the Israelites encountered bitter water? (Marah)
8. What did Moses do to turn the bitter water sweet? (He casted the tree that God showed him into the water)
9. Who supported Moses's hands until they beat the Amalekites? (Aaron & Hur)
10. What symbol did Moses make and from what material, so that those bitten would be healed? (Bronze Serpent)