



THE GOSPEL IN THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL

Adult Bible Study ~ August 1, 2004

THE PASSOVER AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Judaism and Christianity are really inseparable. It is as though Judaism is the seed and Christianity is the flower. Hopefully, this is what we will see as we look at the seven major feasts of Israel and how the Gospel ties in with them.

Read Matthew 26:17-19

In light of the New Testament, we can have a full understanding of the Passover. However, we cannot fully understand the meaning of Holy Communion (The Lord's Supper) without the background of the Jewish Passover.

➤ *Note: Jews today, for the most part, celebrate the Passover the same way as they did during the time of Jesus.*

Two points to help us in our understanding:

1. The Jews have two calendars (like us Christians)
 - a. Civil Calendar
 - b. Ecclesiastical Calendar (the Church year)

We will begin by dealing with the Church year calendar. This is also known as a lunar calendar, which means that it is based on the phases of the moon.

➤ *Note: Each month starts with a new moon, with the full moon in the middle of the 28 day cycle. Passover always falls on the full moon.*

2. The days for the Jews begins at sundown or moonrise. (*Genesis 1:5* – evening, then comes morning.)
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Read Leviticus 23:4-5

The Passover is the first Feast of the new year. All the other feasts are based on the Passover. (The numbering of days.)

- *Note: Passover and Easter are related:*
- *They generally coincide in time.*
 - *There is always feverish preparation for the celebration of Passover. It is known as a joyful, but solemn, occasion. It is officially designated as the "Season of Liberation" or "Season of Joy."*
 - *The deliverance of Israel from Egypt is the central point in Jewish history and worship.*
- *Questions – Knowing this, what are the similarities between Passover and Easter?*

THE PASSOVER - Exodus 12:1-14

The Preparation for Passover – (Exodus 12:3, 5-6)

All the families had to take an unblemished male lamb for four days to establish proof that it was without blemish.

Read Luke 19:29-40

Jesus, the lamb of God, was being prepared for the Passover (four days before His crucifixion ~ also *Matthew 21:1-11.*)

Using the Gospels you can count four days between Jesus triumphant entrance into Jerusalem and cleansed the temple and His crucifixion.

Read Exodus 12:15

This cleansing had to be done before the Passover could take place. (Leaven represented sin.) It had to be thrown out of the house. According to Jewish tradition, the youngest son would scatter a few crumbs of bread in the corners so that the Father could sweep them up and pronounce the traditional blessing for that occasion.

"Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments and commanded us to remove all leaven from our household."

- This is also where we get "Spring Cleaning" – for weeks the mother would be busy giving the house a thorough Spring cleaning, in preparation for the great season of "Pesach," the Passover. Pots and pans had to be thoroughly cleaned. Special utensils were also used. So, the house became spic & span.
- Jesus also carried out this preparation of cleaning out the leaven of sin. (*Luke 19:45-46 and Matthew 21:12-13*). Now, everything was set for the Feast of Passover, and for its ultimate fulfillment to take place.

Passover was the celebration that commemorated the deliverance of the people of Israel from this slavery in Egypt by the Lord. All the food of the Passover meal were symbolic:

- Glass of Salt Water ~ Symbolized the Red Sea and the Tears of the Jews.
- Three Loaves of Unleavened Bread ~ Bread the Jews hastily prepared representing God.
- The Lamb ~ Blood of the Lamb spread on the door that brought them salvation from the angel of death.
- Four Cups of Red Wine ~ Representing, for one thing, the blood of the lamb. This was wine that was mixed with water.
- Bitter Herbs ~ Representing the bitterness and the sorrow of the Jews in slavery.
- Hard-Boiled Eggs ~ Symbolic of the second sacrifice for the Passover Day.
- Charoseth ~ apples and nuts mixed together representing the clay the Jews used to make the bricks that were used to make the Pharaoh's cities.

THE FEAST

Highlights of the feast:

- "The Kiddush"
This is the opening blessing that is spoken over the first cup of wine which consecrates the entire ritual that followed. This is spoken by the host of the meal.
 - The Ceremonial Washing of the Hands
This follows the Kiddush, and is a very important part of the meal. It is this ceremonial washing that sets the host apart from the rest of the participants. It shows that he is the host, the most important person at the table.
- *Jesus was the host at the Passover the night before His crucifixion. What did he do? (John 13:4-17) Why did He do this?*

The Jews believed that washing someone else's feet was one of the most humiliating tasks that anyone could do. This job was left to the slaves or the lowest servant in the household because it was so degrading. By doing this Jesus taught His disciples a lesson of love and humility. This was also a foretaste of Jesus humbling Himself by going to the cross to save us from our sins.

THE HAGADAH (The Telling) - Deuteronomy 26:5-9 (example)

After the Hagadah, the host would have three loaves of unleavened bread in front of him. He would then take the middle loaf, break it in half, place one half aside, cover it with a napkin, and with a napkin, and with the other half, he would pronounce a blessing over it and then break it up, dip it in that sop of bitter herbs and charoseth and give a piece to each participant.

Read John 13:21-27

- It was at this point in the Passover when this happened.
- After this Judas left, right in the middle of the meal, to betray Jesus. Jewish ceremonial law is very strict, and it says that the Jews must observe completely every Feast. So, when Judas left before the most important part of the meal (the eating of the lamb) he, in effect, excommunicated himself from that little congregation. What's even more important, he did not have any part of that new memorial, the newly instituted sacrament that came after the supper. So, he broke the Old Covenant and had no part of the New Covenant, as well.
- Then came the eating of the lamb, the most important part of the dinner. It should be noted that the lamb was always the last solid food eaten at this meal. The third and fourth cup of wine were to follow this meal, but no other food was to be eaten after the lamb until the ceremony was completed.
- This is when Jesus did something completely out of the ordinary. Remember the middle loaf of bread that He took and broke in half? He had put aside one-half of it (the Aphikomen - it means "after dish" or "dessert"). It was to be eaten after the Passover ritual was completed. Jesus took that piece of bread, after eating the lamb, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take eat, this is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." (The bread had stripes on it and it was pierced).

- The three unleavened loaves are symbolic of the Trinity. When Jesus took the middle loaf and broke it in half, it was a foreshadowing of the broken body of the Son hanging on the cross. When He gave that bread to His disciples as He said, "Take, eat, this is My body," He was telling them of the upcoming sacrifice. Jesus was instituting a new memorial, a new covenant by fulfilling the Passover meal.
- Jesus then took the third cup, which according to Jewish tradition, is called "the Cup of Redemption." He then said, "Drink of it all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." This third cup represented the blood of the Paschal Lamb.
- Remember also that the Jews mixed this wine with water that had been heated. The fulfillment of this is, of course, when the soldier thrust his spear into the side of Jesus while He was hanging on the cross, to see if He was dead. When he drew the spear out, blood mixed with water flowed from His side.

What Jesus was saying in this Passover Meal was that He was the true Passover Lamb who was to be offered up for their redemption. He was making a covenant, a new covenant, with them and us.

Covenant – "Berith" – to cut a covenant. A covenant is also always sealed with blood. There must be the shedding of blood, otherwise, the covenant is not valid. The blood also must be shed on the same day that the covenant is made. (For example: Moses making the covenant between God and the people of Israel.)

On that very same day, Jesus sealed that covenant with the shedding of His own blood, The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

➤ *If this supper took place on Thursday and Jesus died on Friday, how then could this covenant be valid?*

The Passover is really our salvation story, not just a remembrance of the historical redemption of the people of Israel. The Passover and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) merge into one complete story of deliverance and salvation.

We also must note that the Passover for the Jews was a very joyful time ("The Season of Liberation," "The Season of Joy"). Why?

This is what Holy Communion should be for us, as well. Yes, it is a solemn time for us to come into the presence of the Lord. But it is also joyful, because we know that the story doesn't end with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, but with His resurrection from the dead. That means that it is all true. Jesus is truly the Son of the Living God who takes all of our sins away and frees us from our slavery to sin, death, hell, and Satan. We have a new life in Him and that is indeed something to be joyful about, something to celebrate!