

Passover Overview

Before the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai, while the children of Israel were still in Egypt, we see the introduction of the annual Holy Days with Passover and Unleavened Bread in the 12th chapter of Exodus. Passover means exactly what it says, that God passed over the houses of the Israelites before pouring out His last plague upon the firstborn. (Before we look at these scriptures let's understand Genesis 1:5.) God's days begin at sunset, not midnight. Exodus 12:1-14, 22.

All of God's annual Holy Days are listed in one chapter of the Bible, Leviticus 23:4-5. They are 'holy convocations' or commanded assemblies. Verse 4 shows that we cannot know years in advance when these 'high sabbaths' will occur. They can only be proclaimed 'in their seasons' because they are determined by the abib or Spring barley harvest in Israel, and by the observation of the new moon of that first month, just as they were at the time of Christ, not by calculation, as in the current Hebrew calendar. Psalm 81:3, NIV, modern translations etc. Passover on the night of the full moon. They picture God's Plan of Salvation for all of mankind. Only by keeping and observing these days can we come to understand the rich meaning of God's plan, the first part of which is the Christian Passover, John 1:29, Revelation 13:8, the Lamb of God.

Jesus said He is the beginning and the ending. Revelation 21:6-7, He gives us eternal life through His sacrifice if we overcome (verse 7), because, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Christ is our Passover Lamb, who died so that all mankind may gain eternal life.

Origins

First, let us remember Passover took place on the 14th of the first month, not the 15th when the Jews now keep it with a seder lamb meal. Why? - Here we will see why this came about. Righteous King Hezekiah of Judah rediscovered the words of the Lord, 2 Chronicles 29:1-6, and determined that his people would keep God's Feast Days, 2 Chronicles 30. But they were too late for the first month and had to keep Passover a month later, as God had permitted. Also, he did not trust the people to sacrifice the *domestic* Passover of Exodus 12, as they had become polluted by Baal and Asherah worship, and so instituted the *Temple* sacrifice of the lambs. Verses 1-3, 13,15, 16-18. Passover observance was later further centralised at Jerusalem by Ezra the Priest because of the rebellion of Judah's evil kings, especially Manasseh. This pattern continued until the time of Christ.

However, knowledge that Passover was a domestic observance (Exodus 12) was not lost. Philo, a contemporary Jewish historian, confirms that the Passover lambs were slain at the houses of [many of] the Jews during the first century before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. He states that the Passover was "...called by the Hebrews in their own tongue, the Pasch, on which **the whole people sacrifice, every member of them, without waiting for the Priests, because the law has granted to the whole nation for one special day in every year the right of the Priesthood and of performing the sacrifices themselves.**" (De Decalogue p.159, emphasis added).

Christian Passover

This explains why the Apostle John called it the *Jews* Passover, rather than the 'Lord's Passover' of Exodus 12. Those who sacrificed their lambs at the Temple on the afternoon of the 14th, consequently held *their* 'Passover' that evening, *after sunset*, ie. on the 15th! Thus the first day of 'the Unleaveneds' which is Passover and the 'preparation day' for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the following 7 days, making 8 in total, became known by the Jews as Passover, Luke 22:1. Let's observe that, by what occurs in Mark 14:12, Greek – 'On the first day of the unleaveneds

when the [domestic]Passover lambs were being sacrificed, His disciple said to Him “Where do you want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?”” This was as Christ and the disciples walked down the Mount of Olives at sunset on the 14th. We see that Christ kept the Passover that very evening at the **beginning of the 14th**, according to the instructions that were given by God in Exodus 12, the night before His crucifixion.

Thus Jesus and His disciples kept the domestic Passover one day earlier than the Sadducees (the Priests) and Pharisees kept *their* Passover. Jesus well knew that He was the Lamb of God without blemish, and would have to die on the **14th** Abib to fulfill the Plan He had made with His Father-to-be before the world was created. It was at this domestic Passover that Christ changed the symbols of Passover, because He would, the next afternoon, *replace* the symbolic lamb and bitter herbs as a sacrifice, with His symbolic flesh and blood of the Christian Passover service. His blood would be shed for our salvation and protects all repentant Christians from the penalty of their sins just as surely as that blood painted on the doorposts and lintels of the Israelites in Egypt protected the Israelites from death, on the night of Passover, 1 Peter 1:18-19.

The rest of God’s Holy Days (Leviticus 23) are *based* upon Christ’s sacrifice as the Lamb of God for all mankind. Passover is the *first* annual Holy Day and it is vital because it is our commanded annual **renewal** of the New Covenant which brings us eternal life. As Jesus said, John 6: 53-57. And concerning the footwashing, John 13:8 and 12-17. Each of God’s Holy Days pictures an important stage in the Plan of God for all mankind.

Note that the annual HolyDays continued to fulfill their role and that **Gentile** Christians were taught to keep God’s annual holy Days, following Paul’s example.

Acts 2:1-3, 9-11 Pentecost

Acts 12:3 Unleavened bread

Acts 12:4 Passover (See Greek or Revised Version)

Acts 18:21 Tabernacles, in talking to the Ephesians

Acts 20:6 Unleavened Bread with the Philippians

Acts 27:9 Atonement (the Fast) still important

1Corinthians 5:7-8 Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread with Corinthians

1 Corinthians 16:8 Pentecost with Ephesians

Acts 24:14 Paul worships ‘believing all things written in the law and the prophets.’

Note that the first thing Jesus Christ does in His Kingdom after His return, is to ensure that representatives from ALL nations come up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, so that the whole world will soon learn about God’s Plan, Zechariah 14:17-19, Isaiah 2:3.

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