

FTB 35 Biblical Festivals

I believe most Christians today do not fully understand Christianity, partly because we do not understand Judaism. I find it interesting that the early disciples never had the New Testament to tell others of Christ. They only had the Old Testament which the Jews would call the Tenach. Unfortunately, the very words “Old Testament” imply that the content therein is old and outdated or at least finished. One could be no more misled. On Pentecost of Acts 2 we see over 3000 souls were saved by hearing about Jesus from the Old Testament. The Old Testament speaks more clearly of Jesus than much of the New Testament; especially when understanding the Jewish Feasts that were given by God and commanded to be “lasting” ordinances (Ex 12:14,17,24). The modern Christian church has made it an “old ordinance.” Now before you turn me off please hear me out.

During the time of Jesus, on the tenth day of the first month of Nisan, the High Priest would walk from the temple mount out the city gate leaving behind him a long row of priests who would mark a trail from the city gate all the way to the Temple. Passover was one of the required feasts, meaning all Jews had to go to Jerusalem to celebrate it as God commanded. Meanwhile, the High Priest went outside the city and picked out a lamb without blemish and would bring it to the gate. Once the lamb reached the gate, one of the priests would cry out, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” and everyone along the whole line would begin yelling out the same thing in unison. Now Jerusalem was literally bulging with people in every home and hotel. When they heard this cry, each one would grab their palm branches and run to the path already marked by the priests, and when the High Priest went by, they would cry out the same words and lay down their palm branches while the lamb was led up to the Temple Mount.

Let’s examine this before moving on. Jesus, our High Priest and the Lamb of God, rode on a donkey on the tenth day of the first month, the very day the High Priest was doing the above mentioned. When Jesus reached the gate people began crying out the same phrase they repeated every year without fully understanding its true meaning (Mark 11:9). (Sounds like some churches I have been to). The Pharisees tried to get the disciples and the people to stop crying this out because it was ruining the “traditional” Passover ritual. Jesus replied by saying, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:39-40).

Next the lamb was to be taken and tied up on the temple mount to be examined for the next three days by every Scribe and Pharisee to make sure this lamb was without blemish. If it was, on the fourth day it was to become the Passover lamb, which was the 14th day of the first month. At 3:00 in the afternoon, the High Priest would say “I thirst” and was given a glass of wine to drink. He then would say, “It is finished” as he killed the lamb. This lamb had to be put in the oven before sundown without any of its bones being broken.

Where did Jesus go after His triumphant entry? To the temple mount where the lamb was to be taken (Mark 11:11). Like this lamb, Jesus was also examined by the Scribes and Pharisees for the next three days until, at the end of which, He was proclaimed to be “unblemished” by Pilate who said, “I find no basis for a charge against Him” (John 18:38). Jesus also cried out “I thirst” (John 19:29), and “It is finished” (John

19:30) before giving up His own life silently as a lamb is quiet before its shearers (Acts 8:38). And as on the Passover lamb, not a bone was broken (John 19:36).

Furthering this incredible fulfillment of God's Passover, the High Priest would go into seclusion for the next three days not to be seen or touched by anyone. When these days were over he then went to offer the first fruit offering to God in the temple. Likewise, Jesus was in the secluded grave for three days, and upon rising, told Mary not to handle Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17). Just as the priest was to make the first fruit offering, Jesus was that offering, "So in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: *Christ, the first fruits*; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him" (1 Cor 15:22-23). Not only was Christ the first fruit Himself but He also offered the believers to His father as first fruits as well. Revelation says, "They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb" (Rev 14:4, see also James 1:18).

Obviously, without an understanding of the God given festivals the completeness of Jesus and prophecy cannot be understood. Perhaps we should not call these the Jewish festivals because they were not just for the Jews. They only came to the Jew first, but now we have become engrafted branches (Rom 11:17). When a branch is grafted into another tree it doesn't change the tree, the branch is changed. Are we trying to change the tree by ignoring the festivals of God? Let us look at Easter for a moment. Is that described in the Bible? No! So how did it come about? The word was adopted from pagans and was celebrated long before Christ walked the earth. It was celebrated by the Assyrians, Phoenicians and even the Philistines. Look it up in a dictionary or two and you will see I am not making this up. The festival involved the "Rites of Spring" near the Equinox of Venus when it was believed that the Earth mother was impregnated by the Sun (Go to Carlsbad caverns and you will hear the same thing). They engaged in ritual sex acts and used fertility symbols like eggs and rabbits and baked round cakes to the Queen of the Heavens. To ensure a good growing season, pagans then decorated eggs and hid them from the evil spirits.

According to the 1934 Britannica Encyclopedia under EASTER it says, "Ostara, or Eastre, was the goddess of Spring in the religion of the ancient Angles and Saxons. Every April a festival was celebrated in her honor. With the beginnings of Christianity, the old gods were put aside. From then on the festival was celebrated in honor of the resurrection of Christ, but was still known as Easter after the old goddess." That is interesting when God's Word says, "Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their *Asherah poles* in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and *wipe out their names* from those places" (Deut 12:3). How did we corrupt the church so much with Easter? It started with Constantine I in 325 A.D. when 220 bishops gathered to establish common practices in the Nicene Council and universalized the Roman Catholic Church. However, it also rooted us in Paganism with a Christian twist. Constantine gave us the term "Sunday" which was also called *Sol Invictus Mithras* (the day of the unconquerable sun, Mithras). In 321 AD he made a decree that anyone working on the day of the Sun (Mithras) would be put to death. Monday was so named after the moon and really means the "day of the Moon." Tuesday is the "day of Tiu," a deity of war. Wednesday was Well, Duh or "Woden's Day," a deity skilled in magic. Thursday was "Thor's day" a son of Woden and a deity of thunder. Friday was "Frey day," the wife of Woden. Saturday was the "Day of Saturn," a deity for agriculture. Even the pagan

months were labeled by Constantine with March (Mars), April (Aprilis, the month of Venus), May (fertility god Maia), June (Juno, a female deity), July (named after Julius Caesar who was thought to be a god), August (named after Augustus Caesar, also viewed as a god). I think you get the picture. Constantine allowed Paganism to infiltrate our society by “Christianizing” it. In order to unify the entire kingdom he allowed the Christians to “add” God to the pagan rituals and thereby pleased both sides. This may be very new to many reading this book but I ask that you do not take my word for it, check it out for yourself. Though I do not agree with all of the theological ideas in the book, an excellent understanding of the past can be achieved by reading Fossilized Customs by Lew White.

I am not trying to tell you to not celebrate Easter, I simply want you to see how the world has blinded us to certain truths of Scripture. Doesn't the celebration of Passover fit Christ's death and resurrection so much better than our Easter? So why don't we celebrate it? Probably because we have never taken the time to research it. Remember, God did say it was a “lasting ordinance.”

Some of you may think I have gone off on a tangent. Well, I had to in order for you to truly understand the verses we are discussing because they will deal directly with Passover and Christ TODAY.

When the Passover meal is celebrated there are four cups of wine used. Jesus would have used the same four cups when He celebrated the Passover. All four are taken from these verses in Exodus 6 from God's promises. They are as follows:

1. Cup of Sanctification – we are brought out from the yoke of slavery.
2. Cup of Judgment – we are freed by God's judgment of the enemy.
3. Cup of Redemption – we are redeemed by God.
4. Cup of the Kingdom – we are taken as God's people.

In Exodus 6:6-7 there are four main “I will” promises of God. I will put the number of the cup by each statement in the following section of these repeated verses. **“I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians (cup 1). I will free you from being slaves to them (cup 2), and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm (cup 3) and with mighty acts of judgment. 6:7 I will take you as my own people (cup 4), and I will be your God.** Keep in mind, I am not interpreting this. This understanding has been practiced for centuries all the way back to the Exodus as Jewish records clearly show. Two of the cups of wine are drunk before dinner and two are drunk after dinner in the Passover celebration. In examining the Gospels we see that what we call the Lord's Supper, is really the Passover celebration. Jesus says in Luke “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16). Note that the Passover meal will find “fulfillment” later in the kingdom of God. (This is going to be the 4th cup). Then in verse 17 Luke states, “After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes’” Since there were two cups before the meal, we see the Gospels do not record the first cup, but here the second cup is discussed and Jesus said He will not drink again until He does so in the kingdom of God. This is the great wedding banquet of the Lamb in Revelation 19, and once again, is the predicted fourth cup. Luke continues, “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them,

saying, ‘This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me’” (Luke 22:19). This was the second cup, or the Cup of Judgment, that symbolized our freedom from the enemy of sin and the law through the body of Christ. Luke then says, “In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:20). Here was the third cup of redemption that Jesus did not yet drink as He said back in verse 17. You will see why in a moment. Luke does not record the fourth cup being drunk, probably because of the foreshadowing of the fact that this cup symbolizes the future wedding banquet of the lamb.

Now lets go to the Garden of Gethsemane where we see Luke giving us further insight when Jesus prays, “Father, if you are willing, *take this cup from Me*; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42-43). What cup was Jesus talking about? The third cup. The one he did not drink yet. The cup of Redemption that God promised, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.” Jesus was talking of the cross where He would outstretch His arms to redeem us. It is because of this redemption that Jesus now waits for us in heaven to drink the fourth and final cup with us, where here in Exodus, God promised that we would be His people and He would be our God.

Though we have only scratched the surface of the significance of the Passover I believe this is enough to show that the Passover is NOT completely fulfilled, and it is certainly not an out-of-date festival. I personally look forward to the fourth cup and as my family and I celebrate the Passover each year it is a great source of joy for us to remember the hope of our Lord’s second coming. I pray that this may spark some interest into the other Jewish Festivals as each one is very significant. Jesus was the Passover Lamb on the very day of Passover. He was the buried bread on the exact day of Unleavened Bread. The first fruits on the exact day of First fruits. The Holy Spirit was given on the exact day of Pentecost (The Jewish festival called Shavuot). It only stands to reason that the remaining four Jewish feasts have future significance as I believe the Scriptures indicate as well.