

Christ's New Covenant

Passover

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Two of this world's religions observe Spring holidays that are similar in nature even though the names and details differ. In Judaism, the evening of the 14th of the first month (Abib/Nisan) is called the Passover (Ex.12:1-28; Dt.16:5-6), and it corresponds to the time when families in ancient Israel sacrificed a lamb prior to being lead out of Egyptian slavery, and through many miracles into the Promised Land. In much of Christianity the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is observed approximately the same time of year and his sacrifice, as the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29), provided the means by which all sinners can inherit eternal life in the new promised land, also referred to as the kingdom of God (Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50-51).

The sacrifice of the lambs at the time of ancient Israel's exodus from Egypt pre-figured the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who would provide the means through which all sinners could attain eternal life, no matter whether they are Jewish, Gentile, male, female, free, or slave (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

It was always God's intent to eventually include all nations within the spiritual family of Israel, as it is only through this family that anyone can enter the kingdom of God (Isa. 11:10; 42:6; 49:6, 22; 60:3; 62:2; 66:19). As all nations (Jews and gentiles) will be grafted into spiritual Israel, it should be apparent that there is only one system of worship (Ex. 12:49; Num. 15:16; 29; Rom. 11:1-36; Ac. 24:14). Therefore, the one true God instructed all sinners to heed what His son would teach regarding His law and

commandments, which included the observance of Holy Days (Mt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7; Ac. 3:19-26). The result of refusing to listen to Christ's instructions is eternal death (Jn. 10:7-9; 14:6; Rom. 6:23).

As we are to listen to what Christ said (Jn. 8:26; 12:49; 14:10), it is very important to examine what he taught the 12 disciples regarding his sacrifice just prior to the Passover in 30 CE. Although he told his disciples that he was going to suffer and die at the hand of sinners (Mt. 16:21; 17:12; Mk. 8:31; 9:12; Lk. 9:22; 17:25; 22:15), it seems that they were more concerned about their own desires to appreciate what he was going through (Mk. 8:31-33; Lk. 22:24-26; Jn. 13:21-29, 36-38). It could be argued that his disciples had not yet received God's holy spirit and therefore were not as concerned about him as they should have been (Jn. 16:7, 13). However, that would not explain why some of the women who served Christ were more aware of what was happening, and comforted him during this very difficult time in his life (Mk. 14:3-9; Jn. 12:1-8).

Leading up to Christ's sacrifice, he told his followers that they would have to, "eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood" if they wanted to have everlasting life (Jn. 6:53). He said this to prepare his 12 disciples for the last meal they would have with him prior to his crucifixion. During this last meal, Christ introduced the new symbols of the Passover. These symbols are the unleavened bread, representing his sinless body that was broken for everyone, and wine that represents his blood that would be shed to cover all sins (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 53:5; Heb. 9:22). He also taught his disciples that they are to wash one another's feet if they wanted to be part of his body, the church

(Jn. 13:3-8). As Christ died at the same time as the Passover lambs were being sacrificed (Mt. 27:46-50; Mk. 15:34-37), he could not participate in the meal he had always kept at the end of the 14th day of the first month in accordance with his Father's law (Ex.12:4-6; Dt. 16:5-6). Therefore, he kept a meal with his disciples in which he introduced new symbols that would replace the body and blood of a physical lamb (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps. 34:20 cf. Jn. 19:33, 36; Mt. 26:26-30; Mk. 14:22-26; Lk. 22:14-20; Jn. 13:1-8). These new symbols represent the body and blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:29), whose death fulfilled the law of animal sacrifice. These sacrificial ordinances were a temporary substitute until the death of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-16; Heb.9:11-14, 22; 10:1-12, 19-22). However, the spiritual intent of this law still applies today (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16).

It is interesting to note that the 72 individuals who were ordained by Christ to preach about the coming kingdom of God, and heal those who were sick (Lk. 10:1-11), were absent from Christ's last supper as well as the loyal women mentioned previously. As most, if not all, were Jews it could not have been the Passover meal that occurs at the end of the 14th day of the first month because it is against the law not to attend, and the penalty is to be cut off from the nation of Israel (Num. 9:13; Dt. 16:5-6). Also, in John's account of Christ's last supper with his 12 disciples, it is mentioned that some of the disciples thought that Judas Iscariot went out to purchase supplies (Jn. 13:29). Had this been the Passover meal at the end of the 14th day of the first month, the disciples would not have assumed that Judas was about to purchase supplies for the Feast, because this evening would have been the beginning of the first day of Unleavened Bread – a Holy or High Day or

Sabbath, upon which no work or trading is to be done (Ex. 31:13-14; Isa. 58:13; Am. 8:5; Jn. 19:31).

Consequently, Christ's last meal with his 12 disciples provided the means through which he could introduce the new symbols of Passover. These symbols were meant to replace those of the first covenant Passover (Ex. 12:3-11, 22; Num. 9:11). Therefore, it would become the responsibility of the 12 disciples to instruct the church to observe the new symbols of the unleavened bread, wine, and foot-washing during future Passovers (14th of the first month) as a memorial of Christ's work and death (Mt. 28:20; Lk. 22:19). Christ's statement in Luke 22:19 is in accordance with the law regarding the Passover meal of the first month because it was to be a memorial as well (Ex. 12:14; 13:9).

The significance of the annual observance of Passover is that it portrays the central feature of God's plan of reconciliation for all of fallen creation (1Cor. 5:7-8). Salvation is only possible through faith in the perfect sacrifice Almighty God provided in His son Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1-8; Ac.4:11-12). All the animal sacrifices and temple ordinances of the first covenant pointed to this pivotal event (Heb. 9:22; 10:1-4; 19-22). As the ancient nation of Israel was required to observe the Passover and the symbols which pointed forward to Christ, the spiritual nation of Israel today is required to observe the new covenant symbols that Christ introduced at Passover, pointing back as a memorial of his death (Jn. 13:8; 1Cor. 11:26).

In fact, the Passover was such an important memorial that God told ancient Israel they were to keep it in the second month of the year if they

were unable to observe it for legitimate reasons during the first month (Num. 9:10-11). As animal sacrifices were no longer required after Christ's death, the foot washing ceremony and the symbols of unleavened bread and wine would become part of the activities during the Passover meal at the end of the 14th day of the first month as well as the Passover ceremony of the second month, if it became necessary. Several years following his death, Christ told Paul about these new symbols that were now to be associated with the Passover (1Cor. 11:23-26).

Paul stated in 1Corinthians 5:7-8 that Christ is our Passover, and therefore we are to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. As Paul had to deal with some in the early church who were teaching that animal sacrifices and circumcision still had to be observed, he would have informed them that these activities were now superseded by Christ's sacrifice, which fulfilled both the animal sacrifices and circumcision (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11-13). He would have told them that they were to eat the body and blood of Christ through the unleavened bread and wine and instead of being humbled through circumcision, they were to humble themselves through repentance and baptism (Mt. 3:5-8; Ac.2:38; Rom. 6:3). The importance of humility is recalled annually "between the evenings" of the 14th of the first month (sometime between mid-afternoon to dark – Ex.12:6; Lev.23:5; Nu.9:2-3) through the foot washing ceremony per Christ's example in John 13:3-8. Therefore, the command to be circumcised prior to keeping the Passover in the first covenant has also been superseded (Ex. 12:48-49; Rom. 2:28-29).

To summarize, ancient Israel killed a Passover lamb and placed its blood on the doorposts and

lintel (Ex. 12:22-23), and trusted that God would pass over and save their firstborn from death. This activity pre-figured the blood of Christ that would allow our sins to be forgiven, or passed over, so that we can be saved from everlasting death. The people then ate the lamb, which sustained them while they marched away from Pharaoh and Egypt, which pictured Satan and his sinful system. This activity pre-figured God's people eating of Christ through the new symbols, in order to be sustained spiritually as they continue to grow in grace and knowledge and move away from Satan's way of living (2Pet. 3:18; Jn. 17:16; Rev. 18:4).

These very important activities took place starting at the end of the 14th day of the first month, and are to be observed today at the same time only with the new symbols that Christ introduced to his 12 disciples prior to his death in 30 CE.

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