

# The Importance of the Passover to Jesus

John 2:23-25; 4:45; 5:1; 6:4; 7:14, 37

## Introduction

The first four books of the New Testament are generally referred to as the Gospels: The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John. These Gospels focus on the life of Jesus of Galilee. Perhaps a better statement would be that the Gospels center on the ministry years of Jesus of Galilee since very little is known about the life of Jesus before His baptism.

Any discussion concerning Jesus and the Jewish feasts would be gleaned out of these four books with some additional content in the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of the Apostle John, Peter and Paul.

Even though there is some debate on whether Jesus participated in the Feasts of Israel, it is with great certainty that we can say that Jesus participated in the the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, as a Jew, we can be certain that He would have participated in all the Feasts of Israel, including: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.

## Jesus Early Years

Perhaps the key phrase from Jesus own lips; *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”*(Matthew 5:17), gives us the purpose to which Jesus’ purpose on the earth is defined. Jesus was to fulfil God’s plan for mankind, which included a sacrificial offering that would appease the LORD’s wrath against sin.

Jesus was a Jew and he was raised as a Jew with all its rich history. He would have been taught the mighty deeds performed by the judges. He would know the grandeur of the Israelites under the likes of King David and King Solomon.

Jesus would have been multilingual, He spoke the Hebrew language and Aramaic which is the language of the day. He may have even known how to read Latin, as Palistine was under the rule of the Romans.

Jesus would have fulfilled His role as Jewish male by reading and learning from the Law and the Prophets. He would learn at the knee of a rabbi.

How do I know this? It is because of the actions of His parents, Joseph and Mary. We can see that from the beginning, Joseph ensured that Jesus and His brothers would follow the tradition of the Jews.

Eight days from Jesus birth, Joseph and Mary made the five mile trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem in order to fulfil the Law of God. The first recorded event after Jesus birth was Joseph and Mary taking Him to the temple to be circumcised according to the Law (Luke 1:59).

Our earliest records tell of Joseph, Mary and Jesus going to Jerusalem “*every year at the Feast of the Passover*” (Luke 2:41). As soon as Jesus and His brothers were of age, they would have made the trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover with Joseph. By all appearances, Joseph obeyed the Law, not only by word but by his actions. As the head of the house, it would have fallen on Joseph to teach his children the Law.

*Deuteronomy 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

The next event in the recorded life of Jesus is found in the Gospel of Luke. This event confirms the degree of commitment to the Law by Joseph and Mary. One year, Joseph and the family traveled to Jerusalem to participate in the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus, at the age of 12, was left behind in Jerusalem as the family traveled back home. They finally found Jesus in the Temple, listening and answering the questions of the teachers; “*...all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers*” (Luke 2:41-52)

It can be deduced then that they participated in the feasts according to the Law.

### Jesus Ministry Years

During each of the three and a half years of His ministry, Jesus participated in the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread. (John 2:23-25; 4:45; 5:1; 6:4; 7:14, 37)

As a faithful Jew, we read that Jesus participated in the Sabbath day services in the synagogues where he read and taught (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54).

Like all the rabbi's, Jesus was often found in the Temple teaching all that would hear Him (Matthew 12:35; 21:12-14; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:47; John 7:14, 28; 8:20). It was in the Temple that Jesus cast out

the money changers (Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15). Jesus referred to His many days of teaching in the Temple on the evening of His arrest:

*“... I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. (John 18:20-21)*

It was in the Temple that Jesus was confronted by the religious elite: Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees and Elders.

It was on two separate occasions in the Temple that the mob picked up stones to stone Him after He said *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”* (John 8:59). And again in John 10:31; *“Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?”*

Jesus celebrated the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, which is not a true feast, but a historical event for the children of Israel. (John 10:22).

### Jesus and the Last Passover

We can understand the importance of the Passover to Jesus from one verse;

*Luke 22:15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:*

The culmination of all the work of Jesus is found in this one verse. All of the works of Christ, the teachings and miracles point to this event on the timeline of history. The Law and the Prophets have declared the importance of the blood sacrifice. The Law proved that man could not measure up to the desire of God and therefore something more than a sacrificial lamb was needed that could take away the sins of the world.

This is the reason that Jesus was so committed to keeping the Passover with His apostles. The relevance of the need for a redeemer for mankind will be found during this important week.

During this week, Jesus entered Jerusalem to the sound of “hosanna” and “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Palm branches and cloaks were spread on the ground in front of him.

Each day, Jesus returns to the Temple to teach. He cleanses the court of the Gentiles for the second time.

The religious elite question Him on His authority. He teaches the crowds in parables: vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46), the wedding banquet (Matthew 21:1), paying taxes (Matthew 22:15), the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the events of the last days (Matthew 24)

Following the guidelines of the requirements for Passover (Exodus 12:1-20), a lamb was to be selected on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, Nissan. That lamb would live with and be examined by the family for five days and be slaughtered at three o'clock on the day of preparation. The Passover meal would be eaten after six o'clock, which marked the new day, the day of Passover.

Looking back at that week, we find the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36) entering Jerusalem and the people selecting Him.

*Matthew 21:9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*

*Mark 11:9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.*

*John 12:13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

In accordance with the Law, the Lamb was to live with them from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>. Jesus lived among the people for the next five days. In the Gospels we find that Jesus taught in the Temple, healed people, and He had private teachings with the apostles. He was examined every day in the Temple.

The Paschal Lamb was to be “prepared” on the Day of Preparation. Jesus would fulfil this during His arrest, trials, and beatings.

The sacrifice of the paschal lamb was a frenzied time in the Temple. All the sacrificial animals would be slaughtered beginning at 3:00 pm, the blood of the sacrifice would be applied to the altar.

The slain animal would be taken from the Temple where it would be roasted, and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread beginning at sundown. During the Passover meal, the reason for the Passover would be discussed and remembered.

Jesus death was at 3:00 pm. (Matthew 27:45-46, Mark 15:33-34; Luke 23:44).

Jesus was slain and His blood was applied for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). His blood is required to be applied to the altar and doorposts of their hearts.

The apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth:

*1 Corinthians 5:7-8 ...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

#### Conclusion

Jesus' entire life was predestined! He would fulfill God's purpose exactly as God had instructed the Jews 1,500 years before.

The Passover is a "high day" for the Jews. Was the Passover important to Jesus? The simple answer is yes. We can see that throughout Jesus ministry, His ultimate goal was His death and resurrection. The death of Christ was focused on the events of Passover.

By careful review of the Gospels, we can piece together the events of that last week. First, we see that Jesus deliberately readied himself for the Passover. His journey and movements, while seeming normal to everyone surrounding Him, were precise with purpose. This was not just another Passover for Jesus. Jesus would ultimately fulfill the requirements of the Messiah during Passover

Did Jesus fulfill the Passover? Yes, the Passover has been fulfilled. On the tenth day of the month, the very day the Passover lamb was selected, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. This is the announcement that Jesus is the Passover Lamb. As the people were all choosing their Passover lambs, the Almighty orchestrated this declaration of THE Passover Lamb.

A few days later, after his last meal with his disciples, which happened the evening before the Passover was sacrificed, Jesus was arrested (the 14<sup>th</sup>). Throughout the next day, the day of preparation, as people prepared for their meals he was questioned, beaten, mocked, and ridiculed, but officially declared faultless (John 19:6). Just as the Passover lamb was to be without flaw (Exodus 12:5), so was THE Lamb, the Messiah, flawless. Finally, the people called for Yeshua's crucifixion.

As the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, the land became dark. Jesus recited the opening line to Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, Jesus cried "It is finished," bowed his head, and gave up the spirit, paying our debt.

From that first Passover in Egypt to the day that Jesus hung on the cross, the sacrifice of lambs demonstrated the picture of a substitution. The lambs paid the price we owed for our sins. Finally, the Messiah came as THE substitution, redeemed us, and renewed the covenant.

### Looking Back

Looking back 2,000 years, it is easy to see that the Jewish people should have seen the significance and role of Jesus of Nazareth. They say that Hindsight is “20-20”. The pawns in this great spectacle should have seen the fulfillment of the Messiah right before their eyes. But they were deaf and blind to their surroundings and the prophecies.

Jesus was crucified on the exact month, day, and hour that the Jews had been handling the lambs God gave them the instructions for keeping the Feast of Passover 1,500 years previously.

Today, it should be easy for people to see the significance of Jesus and the Passover. We should see the importance of Jesus fulfilling prophecy and becoming the “*Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.*” (John 1:29; 36)

So what about you today? Where do you stand concerning the redemptive work of Jesus? Have you examined Him? Have you selected Him? Have you received Him as your own Pascal Lamb?

*Bob Crowder*