

WHAT HAS IT GOT TO DO WITH ME?

by Carl McMurray

Romans 14:4 says, *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.* However, some of the Old Testament writings are easier to link to present day practices than others. Leviticus 23 lists the feast days of the Jews and might cause one to wonder what the Christian can gather from these special days.

The Passover is the first feast day given by God to be remembered by Israel. It was instituted in Exodus 12 and commemorates the 10th plague brought upon all the men and animals in Egypt, when the angel of the Lord “passed over” the land and killed the first born. Israel was spared this death sentence by marking their doorposts and lintel with the blood of a lamb. In this way the blood saved those families from death.

Immediately following the Passover was the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**. This was a seven day feast instituted in Exodus 13. It was intended to be eaten when the Israelites came into Canaan, that promised land which was to be their new home. During the seven days of this feast, kicked off by the Passover feast first, there was to be no leaven of any kind found in their dwellings. They were to eat unleavened bread all the days of the feast to commemorate their hasty departure from Egypt. Remember, it was on the very night of the Passover, the 10th plague of death that God brought on Egypt, that upon the death of the Pharaoh’s first born he ordered Israel to get up and leave the land immediately. They were ready. They were to eat the Passover with their loins girded, their staff in their hand, and their sandals on their feet. So, as the Passover Feast memorialized the blood of the lamb saving them from death, the feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates Israel’s release from Egyptian bondage and servitude.

Following the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the calendar came the **Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost**. Pentecost was called the Feast of Weeks because it took place *seven* weeks (a week of weeks) and one day (50 days in total) after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is one of three major convocations of Israel when all the men were called upon to travel to Jerusalem to sacrifice and worship. As well, it marked the beginning of the wheat harvest, therefore another name for this feast was the Feast of Firstfruits.

Now what does this have to do with Christians? You may be asking. More than you might think. I Corinthians 5:7 reads, *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.* Jesus Christ is our Passover. He is the Lamb of God (John 1:39) that was slain as a victory feast so that His people might be spared from death. The sign of the Passover was and is, blood. Blood on the doorposts and blood on the cross. Blood that saves, makes up for, and atones, that it might free us from the bondage of sin and spiritual death. *And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “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 (Matthew 26:27-28*

ESV). When we eat the Lord's Supper we are remembering that blood sacrifice and the new covenant which was ratified by that blood. Like Israel, we have a Passover lamb has been slain that we might live and His blood is the mark of our salvation.

Likewise, when we eat the Lord's Supper we use the Passover emblem, the unleavened bread, representing to Christians the body of Christ. ... *the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me"* (1 Corinthians 11:23-24 ESV). As the unleavened bread brought Israel to remembrance of that hasty night journey out of Egyptian slavery and their night and day march through the wilderness toward their new home; the unleavened bread we eat each Lord's day should cause us to remember that He has brought us up out of the bondage of sin through the wilderness of this world toward our new home also. We should be traveling expectantly without the encumbrances (leavening agents) of this world that would slow us down or distract us from our travels. As well, 1 Peter 2:24 teaches us, *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* That unleavened bread represents the sinless body of Jesus that was hung up to die for us.

And what of Pentecost? Because of the peculiar numbering of 50 days, and where the count started, Pentecost ALWAYS fell on the first day of the week, Sunday to us today. The day that celebrated the beginning of harvest leads us to the great spiritual harvest of 3,000 souls recorded for us in Acts 2 as the church had its beginning. The feast day that signified the great pilgrimage of Jews heading home for this annual gathering came to signify the beginning of God's great in-gathering of His people through the preaching of the gospel. This spring feast of joy and celebration became witness to a new celebration and spiritual beginning for Israel and all who have open hearts to accept the message of God's grace in Christ Jesus. What more fitting day could be chosen by God to bring His Son from out of the grave and begin the establishment of His church/kingdom on earth? And we get to celebrate our "passover" every first day of every week in joyful celebration and thanks.