

**EASTER OR PASSOVER?**

*Which does God prefer?*



*Read on to find out the truth about these festivals....*

## **WHAT SHOULD WE AS THE BODY OF CHRIST DO NOW?**

*Most Theologians fully accept and in fact teach about the crucifixion being at Passover as a fulfillment of the original Passover of God in Egypt. The well respected theologian and author John Stott, in his book 'The Cross of Christ', teaches at great length how Jesus fulfilled the Passover Feast by becoming the Passover Lamb.*

*There are no credible arguments for the celebration of the crucifixion of our Lord in the way we celebrate it. God makes it very clear in Deuteronomy 12 v 31 that we must not worship Him in the ways of the pagan as we do today, **so we must change.***

*We can only make changes born out of repentance for the sins of our Church Fathers who moved away from the Word of God and for our own sins of continuing pagan practices which clearly are an offence to God.*

*Having taken that step, which means to simply turn away from the sin, we must take up the instructions God gave to us to celebrate His Feasts on the days He appointed them. This simply means to celebrate Pass-over.*

*Six days before the Passover at which Jesus was crucified, thereby fulfilling this Feast of The Lord, He visited a place called Bethany en-route to Jerusalem. This would have been on the 9th of the Hebrew month of Nisan. On the 10<sup>th</sup> Nisan, according to John 12 v 12, we see that Jesus entered Jerusalem and from that very day the Jewish leaders began in various ways to watch and examine Him to see if He was sinning in any way by what He was proclaiming and doing. In fact, we are told in John 19 v 4 that He was also examined by the Gentile leader Pontius Pilot who, like the Jewish leaders, could find no fault in Him*

*Matthew 26 v 2 tells us that two days before Passover, Jesus told His disciples that He was to be crucified. Jesus had been judged sinless and was prepared as the lamb without blemish to be crucified on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan, the very time during Passover in Jerusalem that the Jews were sacrificing lambs in order to celebrate The Lord's Feast. Through this very act, Jesus freed all those, both Jew and Gentile, who repent and believe in Him from the slavery of sin.*

*Paul makes two clear statements in 1 Corinthians 5 v 7 & 8 when describing our sin. The first is that Christ Jesus is our Passover lamb and the second, which again is perfectly in line with the word of God, is that we should keep this Feast. In Matthew 5 v 17 Jesus also makes a very clear statement in the words, "I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets".*

*Of course Jesus and Paul do not want us to abolish Passover, why should they when we look at the enormity of what this Feast represents?*

**1.** *God appointed it to remind the Israelites that it was He who released them from captivity, and to give a sign of the coming of His Son as the Passover lamb for all - both Jew and Gentile.*

**2.** *It represents God's Love and compassion for both Jew and Gentile . Jesus fulfilled the Feast to free us from the captivity of sin and to cover us from judgment that would, without that covering, lead to eternal death from those sins.*

**3.** *This Feast according to the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 45 v 21 is continued when Christ returns.*

- *Constantine incorporated the three religions by changing the set times and Festivals that God had appointed for both Jew and Gentile who had now been joined together as one under the Cross of Christ, to the dates and times of the other two religions.*
- *One of these changes was with regard to the festival Isis –Eostre. The celebration of this goddess was during the time of the spring equinox which falls on 21<sup>st</sup> March. She was seen as a female deity of authority over fertility and was often depicted as a powerful goddess having a child on her knee. This child was her lover and son of the god Horus. Her symbols were the egg and the rabbit.*
- *This change was made by order of the Bishops who, at a place called Nicea in 325 AD, made a statement that is well attested to in history; that they wanted nothing at all to do with the practices of the Jews which they concluded were a hated people. Therefore the practice of Passover was dismissed and the crucifixion date was aligned with the worship of Eostre, the obvious outcome being the name Easter, the subsequent pagan symbolism of the egg and the rabbit and the total denial of Passover as a Christian Festival.*
- *When questioned by Pastor Mike Fryer about this very subject, Professor Franklin H. Little, the world's most renowned Christian Anti-Semitism Historian said that the consequence of this action by the Bishops of Nicea was " a triumph of paganism over the Christian movement of the day. It caused the Bishops to serve the state and not the Church and was bad for the Jews."*

***So, Passover was replaced by Easter out of hatred for the Jews and in an attempt to unify the religions of Christianity, Mithraism, and Isis worship, therefore mixing God's Appointed Feast with the practice of the pagan: a practice which God hates!***

### **WHY THEN DID THE CHURCH STOP CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF PASSOVER?**

- *After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD the Jews were seen by their conquerors, the Romans, as a people to be despised and hated. The Jewish Apostles had been replaced in Jerusalem in 135 AD by a Church leadership of Gentiles who were increasingly being appointed by the civic authorities of Rome, who were themselves pagan worshippers. The Sabbath and the practice known as Judaising, which was simply teaching people to follow the laws of God, particularly in connection with the Festivals as set out in Leviticus and other scriptures, became illegal and punishable by death.*
- *Professor Judith Lieu in her book, "Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire" points out that many of the attacks against the Jews in the Roman Empire were in reality directed against Judaising Christians. This means Christians adopting Jewish beliefs and practices. This was simply because pagan Rome naturally hated anything Jewish, because it was God's call upon the Jews to teach the world that paganism and its practice was an offence to God. Pagans who worshipped many gods, were offended by Jews and particularly Gentiles who had now come to believe in Jesus the King of The Jews, and who were teaching about God's ways and His laws.*
- *During Constantine's leadership over the Roman Empire, the Bishops of the Church who were Gentile were being directed by Constantine regarding Church practice. Constantine was faced with unifying an Empire that followed three religions, Christianity, Mithraism and Isis worship. (Which incorporated the worship of the fertility goddess Ostre.)*

**DID THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH FOLLOW THIS  
PRACTICE FROM THE TIME 325 AD?**

6

*No! The Church that was influenced by the Roman Empire were forced to follow this pagan practice but there were many Churches in many nations which followed scripture, the Jews and the practice of Jesus and the Apostles. The Celtic Iona Community of Northern England and the Christians of Wales were such Churches. These Christians were evangelised by the Apostles, who travelled through Asia Minor and had not yet been forced to change scriptural practice. This meant that until 664 AD they withstood the instructions of the Roman Church.*

*In 602 AD Augustine, an emissary of the Roman Church, met with the Welsh Bishops of Wales. He made every effort to have them change their Christian practice from the celebrations of Passover and Sabbath to Easter and Sunday worship. They refused, and in 604 AD he met them again with the same outcome. It wasn't until their own Bishop Elfodd of Bangor gave in to Rome in 768 AD that the Welsh Church moved to the pagan practice of Easter.*

*However, in 664 AD Wilfred an Emissary of Rome visited the Iona Community and explained that the Roman calculation was based on Peter's preaching in Rome where he waited for the rising of the moon on the 14th day of the first moon, and if in the morning it was the Lord's day, then Easter was on that day, if not, he waited for the first Sunday up to the 21st and began the Easter ceremonies the night before, so it came about that Easter Sunday was kept on the first Sunday between the 15th and the 21st day of the first moon. Wilfred also told the community that St. Peter was holder of the keys of heaven, and a superior authority to those who had evangelized them and therefore they must change. Peter, the Apostle God called as the founder of His Church would never had taught such a heresy. However, this argument which was obviously a lie, deceived the Christian Community of Iona to change from the practice of Passover to the pagan Easter celebration.*

## WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

2

*One of the most descriptive and dramatic accounts of God freeing His people from slavery in Egypt is found in Exodus 12. Sometime around the year 1446 BC, under the leadership of Moses, God gave the Israelites specific instructions which would protect their first born from death and force the Pharaoh of Egypt, who had cruelly oppressed them, to release them from captivity.*

*God instructed the Israelites on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of the year to set aside a lamb and examine it to see if it was perfect and ready for slaughter, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of that month to slaughter the lamb, should it be found perfect and then to cover the doorposts of their homes with it's blood. He also gave them further instructions as to how to eat the lamb. God made it very clear to them that He would strike down every firstborn man and animal in the land of Egypt on that very night, but would pass over the homes where He could see the blood. In verse 11 of this chapter, God says to the Israelites that this is His Passover and in verse 14, He told them to commemorate and celebrate it as a Festival to Him, saying that this was an **everlasting** ordinance.*

*Once free from Egypt, God delivered them from the attack of the Egyptians at edge of the Red Sea by opening the waters and allowing them to go through, but drowning Pharaoh's soldiers as they pursued them.*

*We see in Leviticus 23 that God calls the Israelites to follow certain Feasts which He calls His 'Appointed Feasts' and He says that these should be sacred assemblies. He makes it clear that these Feasts are to be celebrated on particular dates and, of course, Passover is one of those Feasts.*

*We see 1500 years later, from evidence in the Gospels and the letters of Peter, John and Paul, that the Jews were still celebrating Passover. Their writings make it very clear that not only did they keep this Feast but more importantly, that Jesus kept this Feast and in fact, He fulfilled it. ( Matthew 5 v 17)*

*Isaiah 53 spoke of how Jesus was to fulfill this Feast and in John 1 v 36, John the Baptist declares that Jesus is the Lamb of God.*

## **HOW DO WE DO THIS AND WHEN IS PASSOVER?** 8

*This year, 2007, Passover falls on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, and it is a day to remember all that Jesus did for us on the Cross. We can do this practically as Christians by meditating on the scriptures that tell the story of His sacrifice for all. We can share communion with our friends and family and even wash each others feet as Jesus did.*

*Many Christians follow the Passover Seder, a practice followed by Jews and many Jewish believers in Jesus, that features symbolism to describe the Exodus.*

*Pastor Mike Fryer can advise and direct you to many resources that are available for you should you want to follow a full Passover Seder.*

*Here at Father's House, we will have a meditation on the Cross on Passover eve, Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April. On Passover itself, we will have worship and a short evening teaching on the symbolism of the Passover Seder and how it all relates to the Exodus and the sacrifice Jesus made, followed by a meal.*

*Jesus rose from the grave at the end of the Sabbath so at our Sabbath service on the 7<sup>th</sup> April, we will celebrate the risen Jesus. If you would like to join us, please do so. We would be delighted to see you.*



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