

Should Christians Celebrate Passover?

(The Creation of the Christian Seder)

-by Tony Warren

One of the more disturbing trends in the Church today is the proliferation of people who no longer seem to understand the error of returning to observances of Old Covenant ceremonial laws. It is a testimony to this confusion that many have asked, "should Christians celebrate Passover?" They are seeking honest answers as to why there are so many in the Church today willing to partake in this obviously Old Covenant practice?

The answer is that people have become acclimated to such ideas. Chiefly due to Dispensationalist influences in the media, a growing number of professing Christians actually believe that the Bible teaches that the "nation" of Israel remains God's chosen people. Thus they surmise that if they can just align themselves with Israel's culture, land, language, history and traditions, that will bring them favor with God. Sort of like taking out extra insurance. But in truth, they are actually placing themselves back into the Old Covenant signs, which prefigured things that have already come. Anyone looking to the nation of Israel to curry favor with God, is doomed to failure from the start. Because God's people today are a spiritual nation made up of chosen people from all lands, including Israel.

1st Peter 2:9-10

- "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, *an holy nation*, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:
- Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Today God looks upon every soul that is chosen unto salvation, as His sons and daughters in Christ "by blood." There are none who are children of Israel who obtain mercy by flesh (Romans 9:6-8), because ultimately we are all of one flesh (Adam). God is no respecter of persons. We are all children of God by relationship to Christ, and each soul chosen of God is fully accepted of Him, receiving a full inheritance, regardless of lineage.

Acts 10:34-35

- "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:*
- But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Peter is declaring that he very plainly understands that the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down (Ephesians 2:13-14). All the nationalistic peculiarities, sanctification, special rights, covenants, and unity of body, are now found in the New Covenant body of Christ. This is the only place where the Jew and the Gentile alike will find their excellence. It will not be found in their bloodline, for God is no respecter of persons. What that means is that God does not favor or reject anyone based on his or her outward respects, and no external qualifications will engender favor and acceptance with God. Contrary to popular opinion in our day, there is no Jewish Christian, or Italian Christian, or African Christian in God's sight. We are all now "one body" in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27-29

- "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- *There is neither Jew nor Greek*, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
- And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

There are countless people who read those scriptures, but still have not truly understood exactly what they say. In other words, they are still attempting to separate into a Jewish Christian and a Greek Christian, and affording the Jew a higher position. In doing so, they are making God "indeed" a respecter of persons. And this is the core reason why many professed Christians have looked to the Jewish celebration of Hebrew feasts, and have concluded that they should take part in the Old Covenant Jewish Passover. They have even labeled it, "The Christian Seder." Some are of Jewish heritage and prefer to be called Messianic Christians, which is really a phrase made up of double and synonymous identifiers. Because the word "Christ" is simply the New Covenant way of saying "Messiah." So it's like saying, I'm a Christian, Christian. But today it's come to mean a Christian of Jewish heritage. Strangely enough, anyone who affords Jewish people "EQUAL" status with non Jews, are more often than not labeled anti-Semitic. How equal equates to anti-Semitic no one can "rationally" explain, but that doesn't stop the charges. This, despite the fact that God is no respecter of persons, has broken down the wall and made us all one body and declares there is neither Jew nor Greek as far as salvation in Christ goes. There are still those who want to place Israel on a pedestal and look at their Old Covenant ordinances as eternally binding.

Nevertheless, the question remains, should Christians celebrate the Old Covenant Jewish observance of Passover? Should we have a Christian Seder? I believe that the only Biblical answer to these questions is an unequivocal no. Of course I fully understand that by giving such an "absolute" answer in an age of irrational caution, political correctness, Church compromise and appeasement will be disdained and leave many aghast. But I believe that such observances "unquestionably" would be unbiblical. For Christians cannot go back to celebrate the feast of Passover, the feast of Weeks, or any other Old Covenant feast day, such as Tabernacles, Rosh Hashanah, or Purim. And the reason is not because we are anti-Semitic (God forbid), the reason is because Christ our Saviour has already come and fulfilled (completed) these festivals that prefigured Him. And as all of the Old Covenant ceremonial laws were, the Passover feast was also instituted as a "sign" or token foreshadowing Christ's atoning work on the cross. It is one of the oldest festivals in Judaism, commemorating God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. And it pointed towards Christ fulfilling a greater more perfect deliverance.

Exodus 13:3

- "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for *by strength of hand the LORD* brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten."

This was a token for Israel signifying that as it was not by man, but only by the sovereign hand of God that Israel was saved, Salvation is by Grace alone. The festival of unleavened bread signifies that truly they would be made sinless only by eating of the broken body of Christ. He would be their sacrifice Passover Lamb and their unleavened bread of righteousness. The Old Covenant/Testament Passover in Exodus was merely instituted as a "pattern," or as a "model" that pointed to the characteristics of Christ, who was the better sacrifice that would truly purge sin from God's people. The prophecy signified by the token, would be fulfilled in Christ.

1st Corinthians 5:7-8

- "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. 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."

The feast we keep is not with Old Covenant observances of bread or leaven, but with their New Covenant realities. Here in this verse as plain as day is God's instruction concerning who is the new bread, the Christian Passover. It is Christ that we eat of. And to go back to the Old Covenant Jewish observance of the shadow would in essence be a denial that our Passover, which was prophesied in the sign, had come. Christians who are Jews and Gentiles alike should understand from the Old Covenant "types" that the true exodus was from spiritual Egypt, and the true deliverance was from spiritual bondage to Satan, and that Christ is our true Passover. His sinless body is our unleavened bread, and His shed blood is our wine. It was for this reason that Christ became flesh and came to earth, that the "sign" of the New Covenant with Israel be fulfilled. Partaking of the bread is part of our continuing relationship with God.

Hebrews 2:14-15

- "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;
- And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Clearly it was by the death of Christ that God's people were delivered from the taskmaster Satan, and brought forth out of the spiritual bondage in Egypt. Like the token or sign Israel, we were delivered by sovereign God and established as the free (John 8:33-36), chosen people of God. Thus we cannot go back to the Old Covenant feasts that pointed forward to this. The first Passover celebration was actually a prophecy of the coming Christ and true deliverance from bondage. The Jewish people call this the Seder. It commemorated their deliverance from being bondservants in Egypt. Christ's death on the cross represented the "true" act of deliverance that the Passover looked towards. All the Old Covenant festivals were given to teach God's people, through ceremonies, the true nature of His plan of salvation. Unfortunately, today there has come a new breed of professing Christians who claim that we are missing out on something if we do not embrace the Old Testament Hebrew ceremonies, rites and traditions. They neglect that these holy days were shadows of things to come. And they passed away with the coming of the New Testament congregation.

Colossians 2:16-17

- Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:
- *Which are a shadow of things to come*; but the body is of Christ."

The reason why Christians should not judge with respect to meats, times, or holy days is because those ceremonies were only [*skias*] of things to come. They were patterns showing the outline of the "true." So should Christians celebrate Passover which was the pattern? Should we have a Christian Seder? The Apostle illustrates that Christ is the body and substance that those shadows (such as the Passover) represented. Consequently, to continue to observe the old ceremonies in the New Covenant dispensation, is in effect to say, Christ the body has not yet come. This is an offense to the gospel of Christ, a heresy and denial of the New Covenant era. In the original Passover sign, the firstborn of Israel were saved

from the angel of Death by the blood of the sacrifice lamb marking the door of their house. It pointed to Christ. Again, should we now point back to the old sign after Christ has fulfilled it? God forbid! Therefore, Christians are not bound to observe the Passover feast as Old Covenant Israel did, and also to understand that to do so would be to observe the shadow, "as if" the true had not yet come and fulfilled it. This no conscientious Christian would want to do.

Hebrews 9:22-25

- "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.
- It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.
- For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true*; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
- Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;"

The festivals and sacrifices in the Old Covenant holy Temple weren't meant to continue, they were only temporary shadows or figures of the true. Likewise, we don't keep the feast in the Old Covenant observance of the shadow in killing a literal Lamb, but in the New Covenant observance of communion. We observe it in having put off the sin of the flesh in our Passover sacrifice, Christ. Christ has already come as our Passover lamb, and His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He has already come as our unleavened bread through which we are purged from the leaven of sin. Knowing this, we cannot go back to observances in Old Testament rites that look forward to His coming. Even the history of Jewish custom of putting away leaven from their houses at Passover was that they showed forth Christ until He came. With the coming of the "true" the shadow is passed away. But there are many misguided souls who are horribly attempting to bring it back.

Luke 22:16-20

- "And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer:"

When Christ gathered the Apostles in the small room in Jerusalem, he led them in the annual Seder or Passover dinner. And there in instituting the Lord's table, He effectively did away with the Old Testament Passover observance. His words, "this do" in remembrance of me is declaring that the Passover festival is replaced by His broken Body and shed blood, and this is the New Covenant ceremony for Israel. This is our New Covenant feast observance instituted by Christ, and we cannot righteously go back to observing the Old.

Luke 22:16-20

- "For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.
- And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:
- For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.
- And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, *This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*
- Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is*

shed for you."

In instituting this new bread observance, Christ was making the disciples (who were Jews) to understand that the "whole purpose" of the Passover feast was to prefigure His broken body. The New Covenant observance supersedes the Old Covenant Passover sacrifice. And any New Covenant requires a new seal and symbol. Thus we are baptized into His death by the Holy Spirit. So Christians, as partakers in the New Covenant with Israel, have had the Passover celebration replaced with the Eucharist of bread and wine. God himself has thus substituted a new Covenant/Testament feast ceremony in place of the Passover. Because the original ceremony "represents" the Old Testament/Covenant observance, it is of no current significance to Christians today. It stands only as "an Old Covenant sign" of the rejection of Christ by those who still hold the practice. This is a clear message to the astute Biblically minded observer of the error of continuing to practice these sundry Old Testament ceremonial rites. Why Should Christians celebrate Passover? Christ is not coming again to die as sacrifice, He was the Lamb slain once and for all. Any Old Covenant Passover sacrifice will only serve to bring in errors in practice, convolute and confuse the issue.

Romans 6:9-11

- "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
- For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
- Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As Christians who study to rightly divide the word of truth, we should recognize that our Christian Seder was in the body of Christ. That was our Passover feast. We were given the elements and symbols of the New Covenant with Israel in what is known as Communion. By Christ first doing this at Passover, He is transitioning from the "shadow" to the "true," illustrating that His broken body is the transformation. It's not that the true meaning has changed, but the position and observance has changed. Thus the symbol had to change for the New Covenant Israel (Hebrews chapters 8-10) congregation representation. We would no more desire to go back to the old as we would want to go back to Gentiles being unclean, or to sacrificing Lambs blood, or to the laws of separating threads in our clothing.

1st Corinthians 11:23-26

- "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:
- And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
- After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup *is the new testament in my blood: this do ye*, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
- For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

Jesus' death on the cross did away with the Old Covenant ceremonial laws, Holy days, animal sacrifices and rituals. He instituted the New Covenant/Testament in the shedding of His blood.

Hebrews 10:8-10

- "Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

- Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. *He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*
- By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of *the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*"

Once and for all, the Old Covenant Passover sacrifice is of no value to do anything, because Christ has come and established a New Covenant in His shed blood. Should we then offer the body of Christ again in Passover observances? God forbid!

Yet, there are other reasons given for these ideas. I have heard some say that the reason they celebrate a Christian Seder is because it is historically beneficial, is part of our Christian heritage, leads to a greater understanding of Judaism, and gives us a first-hand experience of the Jewish Passover. However, the truth is that just the opposite is the case. It perpetuates erroneous genealogical vanity and stereotypes, it reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of the purpose of Old Testament figures and shadows, and it presumes that observing Old Testament ceremonial feasts or laws is harmless. We all should have a fundamental problem with going back to the shadow that was done away with in the coming of that which it prefigured. Yes, it is part of our heritage as the family of God, but only in the same sense that God's people sacrificed lambs and received the law from God by Moses on the mountain. It doesn't mean that we continue to kill lambs because they prefigured Christ, or that we look for tablets of stone from a mountain. On the contrary, being a Christian "should" mean that we have the Spirit of wisdom and should understand the folly in continuing to sacrifice a Lamb in Old Covenant ceremonies, or going to the mountain looking for tablets of stone. They were types, a sign of the true.

Hebrews 10:11-14

- "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:
- But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;
- From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
- For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

We cannot continue to offer sacrifices, observe Old Covenant feasts, and eat unleavened bread of Passover, which prefigures Christ. A man who looks forward to the true by observing the shadow until it comes, does not return to the shadow after the true has arrived. For that is just a fundamentally flawed rationale and logic.

Moreover, observing the Old Covenant Passover would negate the Lord's Supper "as if" it is a sign of some different fulfillment. Because these people have the erroneous idea that the Lord's supper gives a new or different meaning to the ancient Passover feast of bread. But the truth is, The Lord's Supper "is" the New Testament Passover observance of eating Christ. Why do you think Christ instituted it on the Passover? And did we just read that Christ was our Passover? How could anyone think there should now be two observances of Christ's broken body? The Passover was glorious ceremony picturing Christ's atonement for His people. The Jewish Passover transitioning into the Eucharist or Christian communion is the only doctrine that makes sense, "Biblically." That is to say, if we are truly professing Christians who are under authority of the word of God. And it's not insignificant to this issue that the Jewish people celebrate Passover looking forward to the deliverance of Christ, as if He has not come. Indeed, they reject the Christian idea that Christ is the Messiah. Christians (Messianic or otherwise) should never join

them in Passover feasts, as Christians know Christ has already fulfilled the feast and "become" our Passover. ...and they "of God" should know better!

In conclusion, the question, "Should Christians celebrate Passover" or "Should we have a Christian Seder," is not a matter of Christian liberty or of the conscience of each individual Christian. Rather it is a matter of discernment, understanding, of biblical principles, and of spiritual wisdom. When I hear the question, "Why don't Christians celebrate Passover?" My answer is threefold.

First, Christianity has New Covenant rites and observances that commemorate the sacrifice Passover lamb. If we celebrated Old Covenant Jewish festivals and practices, these observances would put us under the same Old Covenant laws and beliefs that those festivals and practices "signify." Namely, a first coming of Messiah, and a continuing reliance upon works of the law by the nation Israel.

Second, Christians don't celebrate the Jewish Passover for the same reason that they don't keep the Saturday Sabbath, do not observe Old Testament unclean meats, do not sacrifice Lambs or oxen, and do not hold to laws against mixing two different types of thread in a garment. Because these ceremonial laws were patterns for spiritual truths, and when Christ finished His work on the cross, the Old dispensation was over. The feasts are were "completed" or "fulfilled" in Christ, so that it would be unbiblical for us to turn again to the bondage of the law.

Third, we don't need to recover a Christian Seder, or observe a Passover for Christians, because we never lost sight of the Passover observance in the first place. Christ's death on Passover day established the New Covenant Passover feast for us, just as pouring out of His Holy Spirit on the feast of weeks (Pentecost) was the New Covenant establishment of the feast of firstfruits. And by that pouring out of Christ's Spirit, we understand the feast of weeks and have the firstfruits (Romans 8:23) of the Spirit. i.e., these Old Covenant feasts were merely pointing to completion in Christ.

May the Lord who is gracious and merciful, guide us all into a better understanding of His will and His word, and instruct us in the way wherein we should go.
Amen!

Copyright ©2005 Tony Warren

For other studies free for the Receiving, Visit our web Site

The Mountain Retreat! <http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/>

-----*

Feel free to duplicate, display or distribute this publication to anyone so long as the above copyright notice remains intact and there are no changes made to the article. This publication can be distributed only in it's original form, unedited, and without cost.