

The Last Week of Jesus' Life

Various

Introduction

Even though we just started our study in James (Jacob!), we can't miss the opportunity to remember Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. So on Palm Sunday, let's consider the last week of Jesus' life in detail so that we can be thinking of Him and His denouement during this next week.

Distraction

Why is it that this year Easter (3/27) and Passover (4/23) are so far apart on the calendar?

"In 325CE the Council of Nicaea established that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the [vernal equinox](#).(*) From that point forward, the Easter date depended on the ecclesiastical approximation of March 21 for the vernal equinox. (Easter is delayed by 1 week if the full moon is on Sunday, which decreases the chances of it falling on the same day as the Jewish Passover.)" – timeanddate.com

Passover is celebrated on the first full moon after the first full moon after the beginning of Spring. The Jewish calendar date is: 14 Nisan. On our calendar, it ranges from late March to the first half of April.

Discussion about Jesus' Celebration and Fulfillment of these First Three Feasts

[Reference the attached "Passover Calendar" for my proposed schedule of events of Jesus' last days on the earth, beginning with the triumphal entry. Based on my study, I have not only assigned days of the week, but also dates from the Jewish calendar. I believe this calendar best fits the feast schedule, meaning, and Scripture data. There are very, very few details that don't fit perfectly.

One would think that given this arrangement of dates and days of the week, it would be possible to pinpoint the likely year of Jesus' death. Unfortunately due to the variations in the way the Jewish calendar was calculated over the last 2000 years, it is not. The "authoritative" sources for such data disagree with one another and it will take extensive primary source research to establish an accurate and credible calendar to settle that issue.]

This discussion should begin with a reminder of how John the Baptist introduced Jesus when He came for baptism: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

The Selection and Inspection of The Lamb

The preparation for the Passover begins on Nisan 10 (Ex. 12:3-5).

"In the time of Jesus, it was on Aviv 10 ("Palm Sunday") that the procession of the [national Passover lamb](#) for Israel was taking place. The lamb was led into the city from the east. It was being taken to the temple in Jerusalem to be the public sacrifice for all of Israel, four days later, on Aviv 14. The lamb was met by crowds of people waving palm branches and joyously singing [Psalm 118](#) as they remembered God's miraculous delivery of their ancestors from the clutches of the Egyptian Pharaoh. One passage being sung was, "Oh Lord, please save us, Oh Lord, please save us. Oh Lord, send us prosperity, Oh Lord, send us prosperity. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," an expansion of the psalmic verses, "[Oh Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord](#)" ([Psalm 118:25,26](#)).

Following the procession of the Passover lamb, Jesus made His final entrance from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem on a donkey ([Matthew 21:1-11](#))—as had been prophesied centuries before ([Zechariah 9:9](#))—indicating that He was coming humbly and in peace. [He followed exactly the same path to the temple that the Passover lamb had just taken.](#) The crowds of people, most of whom had witnessed or known of Jesus' great miracles, placed more palm branches on the pathway in front of Him (thus, the name "Palm Sunday") and shouted to Him as He passed, "'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'" ([Matthew 21:7-9](#)). ("Hosanna" or Hoshana means "Deliver us!")" – Ted Montgomery

The Passover lamb was then inspected for four days in public view to make sure it was perfect, without blemish.

For four days, the Pesach lamb was kept in public view at the temple for everyone to examine to make sure that it was perfect and without defect. During the same four days, the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees interrogated Jesus; but He always left them speechless, because they could find no fault with His impeccable logic and character ([Matthew 21:23-27](#), [22:23-46](#), [26:59,60](#)). Moreover, after Jesus was arrested, Pilate (governor of Jerusalem) and Herod (governor of Galilee) could find no evidence against Him nor fault with Him ([Matthew 27:22,23](#); [Luke 23:4](#); [John 19:4,6](#)). [This is because Jesus was perfect and without defect, just as the Passover lamb was expected to be.](#)

At the same time that Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man," Caiaphas declared the national Passover lamb to be spotless. (Luke 23:4)

The Preparation and "Last Supper"

Jesus sent His disciples to the location for His last celebration of Passover to prepare for the dinner, a day before the rest of the Jews would be celebrating it. (John 18:28) (Yes, Mark 14:12 is a problem.)

In preparation for the Passover, the household is supposed to be free from all leaven (Ex. 12:15). In addition to the traditional extremely thorough housecleaning, the children play a game before the Passover dinner searching the house for bread crumbs, which are carefully placed and verified clean afterward, by the parents. In 2 Kings 22-23, we read of King Josiah who cleared the entire nation of "leaven" before the best Passover in history by removing all of the pagan shrines.

This practice symbolizes the necessity of our considering every part of our lives and removing every sin we find.

High Points of the Passover Seder:

(We essentially know what Jesus' exact words were as he led his disciples in celebrating the Passover we call "The Last Supper.")

Although women are not allowed to do anything religious in Judaism, a woman lights the candles to begin the Passover, symbolizing that a woman brought the Light into the world.

In the early part of the ceremony, the leader takes three pieces of matzah and wraps them into a three separate compartments within a white linen cloth. Note the appearance of matzah: it has stripes and holes. Soon afterward, the leader takes the middle piece out (Father, **Son**, Holy Spirit), breaks it in half, and replaces one half back into its spot. The other half he takes and wraps into another white linen cloth (graveclothes) and hides it (buries it) underneath something until it is needed again later.

In the Gospels, the passages on which we base the Lord's supper (e.g., Mark 14:22-25) relate to the time of the third (of four) cups of wine in the Passover celebration. At that time the leader (and Jesus at the last supper) takes the hidden piece of bread back out and strikes it in his hand, giving a piece to each person. The blessing the leader says at this time is, "Blessed art thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the universe, **who brings forth bread from the earth.**"

That is when Jesus said, "...this is my body...", specifically associating Himself with that picture in the ceremony, and once again predicting His own body's treatment in the coming hours and His resurrection.

Then the leader (and Jesus) takes the third cup of wine and sprinkles some of it onto the white plate. That is when Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

Jesus' Crucifixion and Events Related:

As Jesus was dying, Luke says that the sun was obscured (Luke 23:45). It's not clear what caused it, but it definitely **was not** a solar eclipse, since the moon was full, as Passover is *always* 14 days after the new moon, by definition.

Jesus died at 3PM, along with the national Passover lamb and every household sacrifice being prepared for the holy dinner.

At that same time, the veil on the Holy of Holies was torn top to bottom. (Mt. 27:51, Mk. 15:38, and Lk. 23:45).

In the inner court of the temple in Jerusalem, in the Holy of Holies, was the Ark of the Covenant. That was where the high priest would go once a year to offer atonement for the sins of the people. A veil, a very thick, woven curtain, separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple.

When Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that heavy curtain was torn from top to bottom. It was not ripped from bottom to top, as though a man were ripping it. Instead, it was ripped from top to bottom, because God was ripping it.

God was saying, "You no longer are on the outside. You can come in. My Son has made a way for you."

The apostle Paul explained how we can now draw near to God:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. (Hebrews 10:19–22)

The veil was torn. Jesus is now our Intercessor. We don't have to go through a person to reach God anymore. We don't have to go through rituals anymore. Instead, Jesus made a new and living way for us to reach God.

Jesus' Burial:

In the late afternoon, the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals, but when they got to Jesus they saw He was already dead, so they didn't break His. This not only fulfilled Ps. 34:20, "He keeps all of his bones, not one of them is broken" (probably not even recognized as a messianic prophecy until after Jesus fulfilled it), **but also most importantly fulfills the instructions regarding the preparation of the lamb in Exodus 12:46, "nor are you to break any bone of it."** Jesus could not have been the perfect Passover Lamb for all of mankind had even a single bone been broken **during the horribly gruesome and violent process of His torture and death.**

We often hear about the paucity of external references about Jesus' life and death. **Recently, there was a copy of the Talmud found and purchased by**

Tyndale House (Munich Talmud manuscript of at b.San.43a) that shows, among other redactions, “passages censored out of printed editions, including the controversial trial of “Yeshu Notzeri”. Chronological analysis of the layers in this tradition suggests that the oldest words are: “On the eve of Passover they hung Jesus of Nazareth for sorcery and leading Israel astray”.”

Since the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, a high Sabbath, was about to begin, they had to quickly get Jesus off the cross and buried. There was not time to do all of the usual pre-burial rituals and preparations.

Jesus’ Resurrection:

And since that high Sabbath was followed by a weekly Sabbath, they could not do anything additional to the body for two more days. Thus, on the first day of the week (Sunday), they went to the grave to finish the burial preparations.

According to John 20:1, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb, before sunrise on Sunday morning and found the gravestone already moved away. Thus, **Jesus was raised from the dead sometime before dawn on that Sunday morning.**

He was in the grave part of Thursday, all of Friday and Saturday, as well as all of Thursday and Friday nights, and part of Saturday night, fulfilling His prophecy in Matthew 12:38-41. **If He was crucified on Friday, he could not have fulfilled the prophecy.**

After Jesus was resurrected, Matthew (27:52-53) says that the tombs were opened and that **many dead saints were resurrected.** This miraculous (and creepy) event was literally Jesus’ first fruits offering to the Father. See also 1 Cor. 15:20.

Conclusion

It is appropriate for us, regardless of the calendar details, to spend this week considering Jesus’ final earthly suffering for our redemption. Please remember these details and images this week.