

FANTASTIC FEASTS... & WHERE WE FIND THEM

The Death Star incited fear throughout the galaxy far far away. According to - and this is a real site - Wookieepedia,

The Death Star, known officially as the DS-1 Orbital Battle Station, also known as the Death Star I, the First Death Star, Project Stardust internally, and simply the Ultimate Weapon in early development stages, was a moon-sized, deep-space mobile battle station constructed by the Galactic Empire. Designed to fire a single planet-destroying superlaser powered by massive kyber crystals, it was the pet project of the Emperor, Darth Vader, and its eventual commander Grand Moff Wilhuff Tarkin.

Far more terrifying, on a personal and national level, was the “destroyer” that killed the firstborn of Egypt on the night of God’s deliverance of His people.

It was the first Passover. We read in Exodus 11:4-7,

Exo 11:4 Then Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt;

Exo 11:5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who *is* behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals.

Exo 11:6 Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it *before*, nor shall be like it again.

Exo 11:7 But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.'

Was this an angel - the Angel of Death? It might surprise you, but the Bible doesn't say the killing of the firstborn would be carried-out by an angel. The word for "destroyer" is more like a job description. The destruction may have been carried-out by an angel, but we can't be certain.

God did dispatch angels on missions to kill:

- When Israel's King Hezekiah had the threat of the enormous Assyrian army near him we read "That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning - there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there" (Second King 19:35-36).
- When the prophet Baal was on his way to try to curse the children of Israel, the Lord opened his eyes to see an angel with a drawn sword (Numbers 22).
- When God sent judgment on a sin of David, "the Lord sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite" (Second Samuel 24:15-16).

It's therefore not inconceivable that the "destroyer" in Egypt was an angel.

There was one defense against the destroyer:

Exo 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household.

Exo 12:4 And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb.

Exo 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.

Exo 12:6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.

Exo 12:7 And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

Exo 12:8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

Exo 12:9 Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire - its head with its legs and its entrails.

Exo 12:10 You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.

Exo 12:11 And thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the LORD's Passover.

Exo 12:12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD.

Exo 12:13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.

We say, "Amen!" because we know that those little lambs pointed forward to Jesus, "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world."

- Just like that lamb, Jesus was "without blemish."
- Just like that lamb, Jesus was examined on the 10th day.
- Just like that lamb, Jesus was killed on the 14th day.

The Israelites knew nothing about Jesus. They were simply trusting in God - believing God - that a little lamb's blood would save them from death, and deliver them to a new life.

Notice the elements of the first Passover:

- They slaughtered the lamb and roasted it.
- They put its blood on the doorposts.
- They ate unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
- They had a belt on - meaning their long outer garment was tucked-in, ready for travel.
- Their sandals were on; and there was a staff in their hand.

That's it; no other instruction, or liturgy, was given. In Exodus 12:14, we read,

Exo 12:14 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.

When the Jews finally built the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, Passover changed. In Deuteronomy 12:14 we read,

Deu 16:1 "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

Deu 16:2 Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name.

Deu 16:3 You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, *that is*, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

Deu 16:4 And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall *any* of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.

Deu 16:5 "You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you;

Deu 16:6 but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt.

Deu 16:7 And you shall roast and eat *it* in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents.

Your lamb needed to be sacrificed where God abode on the earth - which is the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple. Thus Passover became a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Even though it says to "eat it in the place which the Lord your God chooses," it became the tradition to take the meat of the sacrifice and celebrate Passover more intimately where you were staying in or around Jerusalem.

Thus we see Jesus, in the Gospels, eating the Passover with His disciples.

Or do we?? bible.org says, “The precise nature of the meal which the Lord shared with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed is one of the most warmly debated topics of NT history and interpretation.”

Jesus was the final Passover Lamb. Since He was killed on Calvary’s Cross just as the lambs in the Temple were being slain on the 14th... How could He and His disciples have eaten a Passover lamb the night before His crucifixion?

One commentator put it like this: “According to John, Jesus died just when the Passover sacrifice was being offered and before the festival began at sundown. Any last meal would have taken place the night before, or even earlier than that. But it certainly could not have been a Passover meal, for Jesus died before the holiday had formally begun.”

Either the Last Supper was not a Passover meal. Or - more likely - **it was an early Passover.**

You do that sometimes at holidays, don’t you? Have you ever celebrated Thanksgiving *before* or *after* its calendar date?

Of course, celebrating Passover early seems unbiblical. One scholar argues that during the days of the Second Temple, there were, in fact, two-nights on which it was lawful to celebrate. It was due to the use of a different calendar; and it was practical, giving the priests sufficient time to slaughter the literally thousands of lambs.

Another source says, “The Dead Sea Scrolls show that there were divergent calendars in use... and it is possible that separate traditions were, in fact, in vogue at the time of the passion.”

One more source:

The Galileans and/or the Pharisees ate the Passover on Thursday night (Nisan 14) and the Judeans and/or the Sadducees ate the Passover on Friday night. Hence, Jesus and His disciples were among those who ate the Passover on Thursday. Since a great number of people would be eating the Passover on Thursday evening, the priests would accommodate them (as in other years) with an earlier Passover sacrifice.

Jesus' last supper was probably an early Passover. But it doesn't seem all that elaborate.

Here is what I mean: Today there is an elaborate ritual Passover Seder. It's filled with additional stuff you don't read about in the Bible. Now Jesus may have done some of that stuff; but probably not.

What kind of stuff? I'll quote a modern liturgy:

During the course of the evening you will have: four cups of wine, veggies dipped in saltwater, flat, dry cracker-like bread called matzah, bitter herbs, often horseradish (without additives) and romaine lettuce, dipped into *charoset* (a paste of nuts, apples, pears and wine), a festive meal that may contain time-honored favorites, like chicken soup and gefilte fish. Each item has its place in a 15-step choreographed combination of tastes, sounds, sensations and smells that have been with the Jewish people for millennia.

Obviously most of that is nowhere to be found in the Bible. Where does it come from?

The *Mishna* is a compilation of Jewish oral traditions. It was written at the beginning of the third century AD in order to preserve the teachings of the Second Temple period. One section of the *Mishna* is the *Pesachim*, the tenth and final chapter of which discusses the order of the Passover. It is there that some, but not all, the elements of the modern Seder appear.

Can we be sure that the *Pesachim* is accurate? According to the Encyclopaedia Judaica (Second Edition), “it is accepted that Judah the Prince, who authored the *Mishna*, added, deleted, and rewrote his source material during the process of redacting the Mishnah.”

The modern Passover Seder developed after the destruction of the Second Temple, and has been edited and added to over the centuries. We cannot project back onto Jesus an extra biblical liturgy that we cannot be certain of.

One scholar concluded, “Jesus and His disciples would have visited the Temple to slaughter their Passover sacrifice. Then they would have consumed it along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, as required by the Book of Exodus. And presumably they would have engaged in conversation pertinent to the occasion. [More than that] we cannot know for sure.”

Should we observe Passover? No. We’re told by the apostle Paul, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (First Corinthians 5:7).

I’ve already suggested a few ways Jesus fulfilled the Passover. Here are a couple more:

- The bones of the Passover lamb were not to be broken (Exodus 12:46). The Roman soldiers in charge of crucifixion regularly broke the legs of those on the cross, in order to expedite their death. Not so Jesus; He gave up His spirit and died without a bone being broken.
- The blood of the Passover lamb had to be applied in a prescribed manner (Exodus 12:7). Jesus' blood must be applied to the sinners heart by believing in Him.

What Jesus has fulfilled we need not point forward to by observance. Communion and water baptism are the only ordinances for the church.

Col 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,
Col 2:17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

The Passover was the shadow. Jesus is the substance. We don't shrink back into the shadows, but walk forward in the light.

God changed Israel's calendar to make the month of Nisan the first month. To this day the nation of Israel has both a civil and religious calendar that start on different days.

From a spiritual point of view everything starts at the Passover. When someone believes in Jesus as the lamb that was sacrificed for their sin, they are born again and are a new creation. It is a whole new beginning for them as a child of God.