Supplemental Notes Lesson 4: The Drama

Last Supper Timing

The question to be answered is, “Why Jesus was holding a meal that looks like a Passover seder with his disciples on the night before the actual Passover?” With the temple in existence, the national lamb would have been killed at 3 p.m. on the 14th of Nisan. We know that Caiaphas did not enter Pilate’s house the morning of the 14th because he didn’t want to defile himself and be unable to celebrate Passover. He was speaking of the national Passover observance, so this had clearly not taken place yet on the morning before Jesus was crucified. There can be no doubt that Jesus died on the 14th.

There is some debate as to whether the Jewish families would have had their seder meal the evening before that, or whether the Last Supper was a teaching time the night before the actual seder. (We always assume it was a seder meal, but perhaps it was done early.) It makes more sense with the timing to view the Last Supper as a rehearsal of the seder for the benefit of the disciples. One supporting clue for this theory is that when Judas left, the other disciples speculated that maybe he was going to buy things for the feast (John 13). At this point, dinner was wrapping up. They couldn’t have thought Jesus was telling Judas to buy things for the Passover if they were already just about done eating the Passover!

A viable alternative view is that there were too many lambs to possibly be sacrificed all on one day in Jerusalem at the time, so some families held their seder meal one night early. They would save the fourth cup for the next night (the official night of commemoration) so that they were finishing the ceremony along with everyone else.

Either way, Jesus was the Passover sacrifice on the 14th and was placed in the tomb just before night fell to begin Unleavened Bread, which began on the 15th.

Sinai and Pentecost

There is a fascinating comparison between the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai and Pentecost, and how it relates to the tongues of fire that came at Pentecost. Here’s an excerpt from the linked article:

A study of the Jewish traditions surrounding God’s appearance at Sinai reveals that there are actually more similarities between the two miracles than are initially apparent. One verse from the Sinai account that intrigued Jewish interpreters was Exodus 20:18, which in the KJV states that “all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings....” However, a literal translation of the Hebrew would say that “all the people saw the voices and the flames....” [3, p. 135] The wording of Ex. 20:18 raises two questions: (1) How could people “see voices”? (2) How did more than one voice come from God?
In answer to the first question, a tradition arose that God's words at Sinai were visible in the form of flames. Philo, the first-century Jewish philosopher, describes the scene as follows (quoted in [5, p. 29]):

``Then from the midst of the fire that streamed from heaven there sounded forth to their utter amazement a voice, for the flame became articulate speech in the language familiar to the audience, and so clearly and distinctly were the words formed by it that they seemed to see them rather than hear them."

A parallel rabbinic tradition, recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Shabbat 88b), answers the second question by saying that the flames of God's words divided into smaller sparks that traveled in all directions, proclaiming Torah in all the languages of the world [3, p. 135; 5, p. 28]. Two other scriptures were advanced in support of this scenario. One was Psalm 68:11: ``The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." (According to this interpretation, the `great company' of Ps. 68:11 were the sparks that spread the word in many languages.) The other was Jer. 23:29, which was seen as a reference to God's words splitting into smaller pieces: ``Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" A further tradition asserted that when God's word was announced in the languages of the world, Torah was being offered in some sense to all nations. However, only Israel was willing at that time to say, `All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7). ¹

Day of Atonement Curiosity

A crimson sash was tied around the horns of the goat marked azazel. At the appropriate time, the goat was led to a steep cliff in the wilderness and shoved off the cliff. In connection with this ceremony, an interesting tradition arose that is mentioned in the Mishnah. It states that a portion of the crimson sash was attached to the door of the Temple before the goat was sent into the wilderness. The sash would miraculously turn from red to white as the goat met its end, signaling to the people that God had accepted their sacrifices and their sins were forgiven. This was referenced in Isaiah.

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” Isaiah 1:18

The Mishnah tells us that 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, the sash stopped turning white.

Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Hekal would open by themselves, until R. Johanan b. Zakkai rebuked them, saying: Hekal, Hekal, why wilt thou be the alamer thyself? ²

This, of course, was when Jesus was crucified. Note that this is a Jewish source. They don’t believe He was Messiah, so why would this be recorded this way if it had not actually been observed? In response, they would claim that the transformation no longer occurred because so many Jews had mistakenly followed a false Messiah at that time.

Rapture Symbolism in the Feast of Tabernacles

Tabernacles is another of the Feasts that contains a good deal of Rapture symbolism:

- After seven days of living in sukkahs and partaking in all these ceremonies, the 8th day is called the “Last Day” or “Last Great Day.” Jesus says four times in John 6 that He will raise up believers at the last day. It is possible that Jesus was associating the Resurrection of the saints with this particular day on God’s calendar. What else might Jesus’ reference to the last day mean? Hmmm…

- In John 7, Jesus went secretly to the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles, after His brothers urged Him to make Himself public. He told them he wasn’t going right now, but then he kind of snuck in by himself. What is the point of Him going secretly first and then later revealing Himself? Some suggest that it is a foreshadowing of His coming in an unseen way to get the Church and then a short time later coming publicly.

- In Revelation 7, a vast gathering of saints is holding palm (leafy) branches and praising God for salvation. I believe this gathering is ALL the church, not just those martyred during the Tribulation (as is the common pre-trib belief).³

- In the midst of a discussion about the end-times destruction that God is going to bring upon the earth in Isaiah 30:27-33, we get a peaceful interlude about gladness. This passage specifically mentions setting out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord during a feast. Perhaps this is merely a reference to God’s protection of the remnant Jews as they leave to go to a place of protection during the Tribulation, but there is a recurring theme in Scripture that our own time of joy as believers lines up with the time of God’s judgment. Rescue often comes just as the judgment is falling (Noah, Lot). It causes me to wonder about the association of the time of joy/rescue/resurrection for God’s people with the symbols that go along with this festival.

² Talmud - Mas. Yoma 39b, verse 4.
³ It will take time for me to show you how this can easily be reconciled with a belief in a Pretribulational Rapture, which I will do in a later lesson.
Further Investigation/Resources

Huie, Bryan T. “What Does ‘Between the Evenings’ Mean?” April 21, 1997; Revised: February 5, 2011, Here a Little, There a Little. http://www.herealittletherealittle.net/index.cfm?page_name=Between-the-Evenings. This article leaves little room for doubt that Jesus was killed at 3:00 p.m. on the 14th of Nisan, which was the time of the "evening" sacrifice.

“Did Jesus go to hell between His death and resurrection?” Got questions? http://www.gotquestions.org/did-Jesus-go-to-hell.html. There are abundant articles and sermons about the question of whether Jesus went to “hell” between His death and resurrection. Here is a simple treatment of the topic that I agree with and, importantly, clarifies that He did not have to suffer further.


Eddie Chumney writes a lot about the Feasts, and I am linking to his site because you will probably come across quotes by him if you study the Feasts online on your own. I want to make it clear that his stated purpose is to show Christians that they should be observing the Feasts and the Sabbaths. This is very common among those who teach about Jewish culture and practices. We can learn from the research he has done, but beware of this agenda. This is one of its more overt forms… it’s not always this easy to spot. “The Seven Festivals of the Messiah: The Original Version.” Mayim’s Endnote. http://www.mayimhayim.org/Festivals/Feast_index.htm


First Fruits of Zion produces some great materials related to the Jewish background of the Christian faith. They also organize fellowship/study groups that meet in homes in the area. https://ffoz.org