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BIBLE STUDY

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**“THE PLACE WHICH THE LORD SHALL CHOOSE TO PLACE HIS NAME THERE"**

**Deuteronomy 16:1-22**

***Deuteronomy 16:1 "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night."***

***Deuteronomy 16:2 "Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there."***

Abib is the first month of the Hebrew year. Abib is Hebrew for “fresh ears of corn.” The month was later renamed Nisan. It is very similar in time to our April. There were three festivals on Israel’s annual worship calendar that required all males to make a pilgrimage to the central sanctuary. The first was Passover which is a remembrance of the night that death passed over the Hebrew homes with the blood on their doors. New information in this passage is that the Passover animal must be sacrificed at the central sanctuary, whereas earlier (Leviticus 23:4-8; Numbers 28:16-25) the place was not specified because it was observed in private homes. The paschal lamb was to be prepared in memory of that night. The paschal lamb had to be a yearling of the first year from the sheep, or goats. It had to be a male without blemish. It had to be consumed by the family, so the size the family could eat at one sitting had to be taken into consideration when choosing it. This had to be at the chosen place of the LORD.

***Deuteronomy 16:3 "Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, [even] the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life."***

***Deuteronomy 16:4 "And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there [any thing] of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning."***

***Deuteronomy 16:5 "Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee:"***

This is speaking of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It overlapped the time of the Passover. Unleavened bread symbolizes the sinless body of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were to eat this bread without leavening (adding yeast) and remember the bitter affliction of their stay in Egypt. In Egypt they were expected to leave in haste the next morning so there was no time to prepare the leftover meat or to cook leavened bread before they had to flee. Moses emphasized again that the Passover was to be observed only at the central sanctuary and not in their communities. They came out of Egypt quickly, and there was no time for bread to rise. The command to eat unleavened bread was so serious that there was to be no yeast anywhere in their territory during those days. The word “yeast” is frequently representative of sin in Scripture. The unleavened bread helps them remember for all generations. The number 7 means spiritually complete. We see that this feast of unleavened bread lasted 7 days. The Passover animal that was sacrificed, shall all be eaten up in one night by the family that offered it. This sacrificial lamb was symbolic of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us all at Calvary. He was crucified outside the city wall. The sacrificial animal must, also, be sacrificed outside the gates.

***Exodus 12:10 "And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire."***

***Exodus 12:15 "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel."***

***1 Corinthians 5:6-8***

***6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?***

***7 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:***

***8 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.***

***Deuteronomy 16:6 "But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt."***

***Deuteronomy 16:7 "And thou shalt roast and eat [it] in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents."***

***Deuteronomy 16:8 "Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day [shall be] a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work [therein]."***

The command for the men to appear before the Lord at the tabernacle and later the temple in Jerusalem was underscored by the corollary that a Passover celebration was prohibited in any town in Israel except the place where the Lord chooses to have his name dwell, which would eventually be Jerusalem. The sacrificial lamb must not be sacrificed in the home, it must be done outside the city of the LORD's choosing. This really is speaking of all sorts of cooking. Many times, the meat was boiled. This offering was to be eaten at the place of sacrifice. They were to cook and eat it at night (sundown the night before, and then in the morning to return to their temporary quarters near the central sanctuary. The first Passover and the liberation from Egypt were considered the birth of Israel as a nation, so requiring Passover to be observed as a national holiday reinforced the importance of this festival and God’s deliverance. The tents would have been those erected by the worshipers as temporary quarters during the festival. The Unleavened Bread Feast overlapped the Passover. It appears at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; they had a holy convocation. Since this section expanded on the fourth commandment related to the Sabbath, Moses stressed that on the seventh day of the festival they were to do no work. They came together and worshipped God.

***Deuteronomy 16:9 "Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from [such time as] thou beginnest [to put] the sickle to the corn."***

***Deuteronomy 16:10 "And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give [unto the LORD thy God], according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:"***

***Deuteronomy 16:11 "And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that [is] within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that [are] among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there."***

***Deuteronomy 16:12 "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes."***

The next national gathering was the Festival of Weeks, also known as Pentecost (from the Greek term meaning “fiftieth”), which occurred fifty days after the festival of Firstfruits. Elsewhere it is called the Feast of the Harvest (Exodus 23:16) or “the day of the first fruits” (Numbers 28:26). This is also called the Feast of Weeks. They begin counting from the second day of the Passover. They counted it from the beginning of the corn harvest. The 50th day of this feast winds up at Pentecost. Pentecost occurred 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus. This was a joyful celebration of God’s abundant provision in the harvest and was marked by a freewill offering given in proportion to how the Lord had blessed them throughout the year. There was a joyful communal meal at the central sanctuary that was to include the Levites and the marginalized. This freewill offering was an offering made of love and appreciation, and not of obligation. These were voluntary offerings from the people. The focal point of this festival was to celebrate the bountiful crops of that year. Regardless of economic or social status, all were to celebrate before the LORD joyously while presenting a freewill offering. They gave as the LORD had blessed them. These were given in addition to the burnt, meat, and drink offerings. This rejoicing had to do with praise and thanksgiving. This was, possibly, done by songs and various other types of worship. It seemed, they all entered into this worship. Their rejoicing was at the place the LORD had chosen for worship and praise. Some of the thanks and praise should be directed to the fact that they were now free. They must remember, they had been in bondage in Egypt. Now, they are free, and should praise the LORD continually for setting them free. They must obey the will of the LORD to stay free.

***Deuteronomy 16:13 "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:"***

***Deuteronomy 16:14 "And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that [are] within thy gates."***

***Deuteronomy 16:15 "Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice."***

The third pilgrimage festival to the central sanctuary was the Feast of Shelters or Booths. Also called the Feast of Tabernacles and occurs after the Day of Atonement. This was a seven-day observance in which the Israelites were commanded to build and live in temporary shelters as a reminder of God’s care for them during their wilderness wanderings (Leviticus 23:42-43). It also celebrated God’s provision in the fall harvest. This festival and was held seven days after the grain and grape harvests in September/ October. The earlier festival (Feast of Weeks) was celebrated after the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Booths was celebrated after most of the other grains were harvested and the orchards ripened. Again, this was to be observed by all within the community, not just the landowners. We find this special time of rejoicing is for everyone. It is even specifically mentioned that the Levites should rejoice, too. This is everyone who lives in the gates. This seven-day celebration is, sometimes, thought of as the time the Christians are tabernacled in heaven with God, while the wrath of God falls upon the earth. Others believe it to symbolize the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. Seven shows spiritual completeness. It is to last seven days. This is a time of extreme rejoicing. This feast is, sometimes, called the Feast of Ingathering. It seems, there is no time for anything, but rejoicing, during this time. If this is the time of the rapture of the church, this would certainly be reason for rejoicing. If it symbolizes the reign of Jesus on the earth, there would be tremendous reason to rejoice.

***Deuteronomy 16:16 "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:"***

***Deuteronomy 16:17 "Every man [shall give] as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee."***

Moses stated that three times a year all males were to appear before the LORD at the central sanctuary for the three annual festivals just mentioned. Males were required to attend, but women and children were invited to participate if they were able (vv. 11, 14). All males were to appear before the LORD thy God each year. And they were not to appear before Him empty-handed, since the festival celebrated the provision of the Lord in the harvest. Each one was to give as he was able and as God had blessed him. The poor give less and the rich give more, but they all give. Moses’s summary of these festivals reminded the men that, as the heads of their families, they were to lead the way in worshiping the Lord. (This principle carries over into our time.) They were also to bring a gift in keeping with their means and reflecting how the Lord had blessed them.

***2 Corinthians 9:7-8***

***7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.***

***8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:***

All three celebrations involved bringing tribute, whether firstborn animals or freewill offerings. Each person was to give as he was able, in accord with God’s blessings on him for that year. Some of the times of worship are optional. It appears, the three times, mentioned in the verse above, are the times very important to practice feast and sacrifices. Unleavened Bread Feast overlaps the Feast of Tabernacles. There were really three harvests. The first of the harvest was at Passover, or Unleavened Bread. The second harvest was at Pentecost, or Feast of weeks. The fall harvest was Tabernacles. These three must be kept, to remain in good standing with God. We, Christians, will be on that wilderness journey until we find our eternal home in heaven with God.

***Deuteronomy 16:18 "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment."***

***Deuteronomy 16:19 "Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous."***

***Deuteronomy 16:20 "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."***

This is the beginning of a new section. Moses had just appealed for compassion toward those in need and for worship of the LORD with rejoicing. Here he returned to the theme of chap. 13, which focused on the conduct of national and spiritual leaders. This passage deals with job descriptions for different officials within Israel. Having discussed commands dealing with covenant loyalty, Moses transitioned to human leaders who would have political and spiritual administrative responsibilities. The first officials to be discussed, because of their importance in maintaining justice, were the judges. Since Deuteronomy is a law code, it is fitting that Moses began with those who would arbitrate on legal matters. After the nation settled in the land, judges and officers were to be appointed for judging the people with righteous judgment. Earlier (1:9-18) Moses addressed the need for impartial judges to assist in administration, and here he gave additional instructions. Theses judges were in no way to distort justice, be partial, or take a bribe. Bribes were especially forbidden since they blind the eyes of the wise. Their main task was to pursue justice, because when justice characterized Israel, they would remain alive and continue to possess the land the LORD was giving them. These judges and officers are to decide in civil matters. On spiritual matters, the priests and the high priest decide. They must be chosen carefully and must judge justly among the people. They must judge with no outside persuasion. They must be of high character, so they cannot be bribed. They must not give advantage to anyone, because of their station in life. They must judge righteously because they have a judge in heaven that will judge them someday. They are greatly honored to be made judges. With greatness, goes great responsibility. God wants His people to live righteous lives. They are to live by the law He gave them. If they are to be His then they must be honest and just in all they do. They must set an example for the heathen world around them. Biblical Israel was a theocracy, meaning that the country had a form of government in which God served as the nation’s King. This meant that the nation’s civil leaders, its judges and officials, were charged with judging the people with righteous judgment just as the Lord would. As a nation in covenant with God, Israel was accountable to the law of Moses, the statutes and commands that God had given the people through his servant Moses. God’s leaders, those of yesterday and today, are not to pursue selfish gain but to pursue justice alone.

***Deuteronomy 16:21 "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee."***

***Deuteronomy 16:22 "Neither shalt thou set thee up [any] image; which the LORD thy God hateth."***

The theocratic nature of Israel’s government is clearly seen in these verses. Moses suddenly seemed to change subjects from the duties of judges to forbidden forms of worship. But the two topics were intricately related because in Israel, even the civil rulers were responsible for guarding the nation’s purity of worship and punishing offenders. Moses put the leaders on alert to watch for violations of true worship. Much worship of false gods took place in groves. The altar of God is never to be associated with anything like that. The groves must not be near the holy altar. The fire of God is near the altar. God would even burn the trees up if they were near. They must not be near, because they are evil. Images are things made with hands. God is Spirit. Things you can see with physical eyes, or touch with physical hands, are forbidden. They are not God. God is the Creator of everything and everyone. Israel was the only theocracy ever ordained by God. And as much as some believers might wish it were so in America, this country is not a theocracy. More importantly, our kingdom calling as the church is not to make it so.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Observe the month of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and keep the Passover unto the LORD God.
2. What is Passover remembering?
3. What kind of bread is to be eaten with it?
4. How many days is unleavened bread to be eaten?
5. What happens to those who eat leavened bread during this time?
6. What type of cooking is spoken of in verse 7?
7. What are the seven weeks, in verse 9, called?
8. The 50th day of this feast winds up at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. The freewill offering is not of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but love and appreciation.
10. "Tabernacles", in verse 13, were the same as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
11. How many times a year must all males appear before the LORD God?
12. How much shall each person give?
13. How must the judges and officers judge?
14. Why are groves forbidden to be near the altar?
15. God is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.