THE THREE PASSOVERS

In the Public Ministry of the Messiah

Some Background

- Israel was already about 2000 years old when Jesus was born to the virgin Mary.
- God had chosen a people through Abraham -- made promises of blessings, a nation, and land. He covenanted with them to be their God, they his people.
- God grew them in size through the Patriarchs.
- God redeemed them from bondage and death in Egypt -- instituting the Passover Lamb's blood as the saving sign, the day a memorial for ever. (Ex. 12:13-14)
- God led them by Moses -- gave governing Laws, statutes, ordinances for daily life.
- God gave them means for fellowship with himself: a tabernacle, sacrifices (offerings) and feast days.
- Israel had received the promised land of Canaan and conquered it under Joshua, but their long history included periods of disobedience to God's Laws followed by punishments and eventual expulsion from the Land. Their repentance always brought God's forgiveness and favor.
- Following 70 years captivity in Babylon for idolatry and disobedience, Israel was back in their land around the year 440 B.C.
- Jesus, our Messiah, came in the likeness of men, into the world he had created, in the fulness of God's time. (about 4 B.C.)

Hebrews 2:14-17 . . . as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) 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; . . . he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. . . . that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Before we see Jesus as he revealed himself during the nation's observance of Passover, some history concerning Jewish leadership and practices:

- Israel was again under foreign rule - this time, Roman. Even their Temple had a contingent of Roman guards stationed above the Temple mount.
- The Temple rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah around 425 B.C., was now massive in size and beauty, completed under Herod the Great over a period of 46 years.
- Israel's system of worship had been corrupted under the leadership of Priests, Pharisees, Sadduces, Scribes, and Rabbis (spiritual teachers.) Greed for power and personal gain, and teachings that strayed far from Scripture laid a burdensome yoke on the people worse than Roman rule.
The Three Passovers

But surely, Messiah would soon come and right all these wrongs! Israel was truly a nation in waiting. Jewish males presented themselves before Jehovah in the appointed place - Jerusalem-- at the appointed times. Three times yearly they bought sacrifices and offerings. One day the promised Messiah would step forward and present His credentials before Jehovah, priests and people.

Jesus Christ was inextricably bonded with Old Testaments types, symbols and prophetic pronouncements. His miracles were ‘signs’ - credentials of divinity. He attended the Feasts in Jerusalem as the one prefigured in all the ceremonies, the offerings and the Feasts ordained by God way back in the time of the Exodus. At Jesus’ last Passover, he will bring to fulfillment each of these types.

“...when we examine carefully the words of Christ at the Feasts, they allow us a magnificent view of the anti-typical ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. While the minds of the people were occupied with the sounds and ceremonies and celebrations, Jesus Christ stepped forward to make astonishing statements about Himself, His Father, His relationship to the eternal Word, what they must do about Him, and the consequences of their decision.”

After years in a carpenter’s shop in the inconspicuous village of Nazareth, the Messiah steps onto center stage... he enters Jerusalem, the City of David.

Forerunner John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3) first recognized the Lord as Messiah (27 A.D.) Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. (Jn. 1:29)

Priests and Levites were sent to question John - he quotes from Isaiah 40:3-11.

What a shock to the Pharisees’ complacent authority!

Then comes a strange but amazing event at Cana during a wedding feast. Water turned into wine! John 2:11-13 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

I. The first Passover of Jesus’ Ministry

A. Remember Passover truths:
   1. Deliverance from bondage
   2. Bought into a new relationship w/Jehovah
   3. Receiving a new destiny - a promised land
   4. A new national birth
   5. All through the Lamb selected, scrutinized, roasted, eaten.

John 2:13 The Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He comes to the Temple and finds a scene of corrupt marketing. He drives out the merchants and animals. Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise... People are stirred up - the rulers and Pharisees amazed, offended and angry. Jesus answered their demand for a sign to justify his actions by saying, destroy this temple, and I will raise it in three days. (2:19) He gives them a “sign” above all other signs - his resurrection from the dead! This is the sign surpassing and confirming all He would lay before them in the next 3
years. His miracles, words and actions will all verify that he is the Messiah.

(Passover also incorporates the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Was it possible that this day that Jesus cleansed the Temple was the very day before Passover when all the people were busily ridding their homes of every trace of leaven, (the evil that reminded them of Egypt)?

Did the Jews understand? They knew the Scriptures - it was their life work. “At no time in the course of Jesus’ ministry did the Jews objectively examine His claims. An adversary situation prevailed from the outset - the majority of them turned away at the very dawn of his presenting himself as Messiah. They forfeited their responsibility to God, to truth, and to a heart-hungry nation.” (McQuaid)

So far, what has Jesus revealed about himself? To John the Baptist? To the people? To his disciples? To the leader of Judaism?

B. People are streaming to the Temple with their offerings amid sounds of high excitement. But someone of moral uprightness and an open, searching heart was making plans.

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. In the following conversation, Jesus will openly and clearly identify himself as “Son of man,” “come down from heaven,” the “Son of God,” who “must be lifted up” “to save the world.” Let’s remember, Nicodemus is a learned man of the Scripture. He has heard of Jesus’ teaching in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21) proclaiming to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy!

Jesus: Unless a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Ezekiel 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit . . .

Nicodemus: How can these things be?

Jesus: The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Jesus: Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? ... We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. Jesus here asserts his pre-existence, his transcendence, omnipresence, and his union w/ his Father.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the
Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Jesus recalls the serpent during the Exodus - Numbers 21:5-9. Mercy will be extended to those who would look to him as he is lifted up.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This man Jesus lifted up? the Lamb, the burnt offering, the sin offering? For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: Jesus the peace offering?

but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light . . . But he that doeth truth cometh to the light . . .

Is Jesus the light?

Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined

All within the context of the Feast of Passover, Jesus:
1. Asserted his authority over the Temple ( 2:14-17)
2. Displayed his divine power by miracles
3. Declared he was God’s Son sent from heaven
4. Declared new birth a necessity; nothing to do with keeping the Law
5. Showed that He himself is the Passover Lamb - for eternal life
6. Showed the necessity of believing in Him 3:18-21

II. THE SECOND PASSOVER OF JESUS’ MINISTRY

John 6

John 6:1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee... And a great multitude followed him,... And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

When Jesus... saw a great crowd coming unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? Mark’s account of this miracle tells us: Jesus was moved with compassion toward them because they were as sheep without a shepherd. 6:64

9–15 Jesus miraculously feeds 5000 + women and children. He sends the disciples to Capernaum by boat and He departs into a mountain himself alone.

16-21 Jesus comes to the disciples during the night in a severe storm -walking on the water. It is I; be not afraid. (See also Isaiah 43:2)

The next day, the people search for and find Jesus. He was surely now the talk of every
village in the area. Many here could be on their way to Jerusalem for Passover. In addition to the people, we find the “Jews” mentioned in v. 43 - the adversary!

Miracles - power -- the wisdom of Jesus’ teaching - his knowledge -- his qualities! In reality, many did see and believe that Jesus was the Messiah! The great problem was what they believed about him. They could not cross the reality that this man was actually proclaiming that he was God! Rabbinic teaching looked for the Messiah as less than divine, but a God-empowered man -far above the ordinary human. Maybe royal, certainly prophetic. (Deut. 18:18) The principle emphasis was on Messiah as a warrior-king.

Jesus tells them:

John 6:44-46  No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, “they shall be all taught of God.” (they well knew this passage from Is. 54:13) Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

John 6:46  Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

He has seen the Father?  He is “of God?” Divine?”

Remember that they were in the 3-week period of their Passover. Their synagogue readings included Exodus 12 and Numbers 16 - that spoke of the manna from heaven - for bread, and the quail, for meat . . . water from the rock - all embedded in their memory. And now . . . .

John 6:57-59  As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum

Jesus was presenting a terrible dilemma! Cannibalism! Is he mad?

Everyone was faced with a decision!

To the twelve: Doth this offend you? . . . It is the Spirit that quickens - the flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life. (61, 63)

Many of his disciples, when they heard this, said:

This is a hard saying; who can hear it?

III. THE THIRD AND LAST PASSOVER OF JESUS’ LIFE

John 13 - 19

A. John 12:12  Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (The Sunday before his death -- fulfills Zechariah 9:9 ) The people chant: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. Psalm 118:26  (from the Hallel group of Psalms 113 - 118) an integral part of every Passover feast)
THE THREE PASSOVERS

B. During the next days until Jesus’ death, there will be a convergence of all the Feasts -- a summary expression of all that the sacrificial system proscribed!

The hour is come. 12:23

Passover: redeemed from bondage in Egypt. Now: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us
(1 Corinthians 5:7) -- redemption from sin for all who believe

Feast of Unleavened Bread: the Seder dinner in the Upper Room
1 Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.
2 Corinthians 5:21 For (God) hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

First Fruits: foreshadows the Resurrection.
Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit. John 12:24 Christ is risen. . .and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . and of them that are Christ’s at his coming. A Cor 15:20,23

Pentecost signifies the completion of God’s great work of redemption. God now indwells his people through the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room discourse, found in John 14 through 16.
John 14:26 the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.
John 16:13-14 the Spirit of truth. . .will guide you into all truth:. . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashannah) Symbolizes the rapture, and the resurrection of the righteous. Jesus said . . . he that heareth my voice. . . .shall not come into condemnation. John 5:24 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 12:30, 32 Be of good cheer - I have overcome the world! 14:33

Day of Atonement It is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. 19:30

Feast of Tabernacles In my Father’s house are many mansions . . .I go to prepare a place for you . . . abide in me . . .as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, may they be one in us.
The final in-gathering of Israel is future, in the Millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Zecariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Notes drawn from The Outpouring Jesus in the Feasts of Israel
By Elwood McQuaid