**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

***God’s Passover, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost***

May 5th, In the Year of Our Lord 2024

Pastor Matthew Diehl

(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

 Both Jews and Christians have just observed their respective holy days. . . for Christians, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . for Jews, the Passover. Both holy days are tied to the Holy Land. . . the Promise Land and the city of Jerusalem. The Resurrection took place 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. The Jewish Passover took place in Egypt about 3400 years ago and is tied to the Hebrews returning to the Promise Land because God made a faith covenant promise with Abraham 4000 years ago. The promise was to Abraham and all the nations of the world (Genesis 3:12). The Faith-Promise was to justify all people who faithfully surrendered their heart to God. This Faith-Promise is God’s eternal plan for all human redemption.

 Before Abraham, we see that Abel, Enoch, and Noah were approved and justified to God by their faith (Hebrews 11:1-2). Abraham was called by God and through faith obeyed Him. Directed by God, Abraham went to a place as an alien to receive for an inheritance the land of promise to a city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:8-10). From this biblical narrative, proven by world history and archeology, the Jews have an ancient, historical claim to the land and a place among the nations of the world. However, the enemy of God is at work today as they were with Adam and Eve. It is the same web of lies and deception in an effort to destroy life.

Every day the world watches the war news from Israel. There is also news from around the world of people who support Israel and those that are Jewish haters. We Americans are fully aware of the evil leadership in some domestic universities who are allowing and approve of hating Jews and the nation of Israel and who have aligned themselves with the devil as instruments of terror organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah and the terrorist state of Iran.

Informed people know that the United Nations in 1948 issued a national charter to the Jews to geographically form the current nation of Israel. There had to be a majority vote by the civilized nations of the world to issue the Jews their national charter whereby they took their station among the world’s recognized counties.

Since 1948, the world has witnessed the neighboring Arab/Islamic states and terror groups attack Israel with the goal of annihilating the Jews from the earth. In fact, most of us know and have heard the leaders of Iran state this is their goal.

The western world observes the Cross of Christ every year. Unless you are a Christian who is member of a church that follows a liturgical calendar. . . the events of 2000 years ago that follow the Resurrection are have been lost in the business of life. Regarding the Cross of Christ, this year the Roman Catholic church observes the following days: Easter Sunday March 31, 2024; The Ascension of the Lord [Thursday] May 9, 2024; Pentecost Sunday May 19, 2024. These are important events to remember regardless of where you go to church. The dates change year-to-year due to the lunar calendar which places the first Sunday after the full Moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox to be Resurrection Day. So, it is the event that is important to remember.

These dates are set aside to observe the “beginning days” of what most people call Christianity. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the distinctive separating event in all of human history that defines the purpose of the Incarnation apart from any other religious claim.

God intervened in the affairs of men to fulfill the promise, that salvation comes through a surrendering faith thereby affording all the opportunity to be reconciled to Him. The Cross of Christ reaches across national borders, ethnic, racial, men and women, children and youth to say “all who call upon me will be saved” Joel 2:32, Romans 10:13. God’s prophet Isaiah, in the land of Israel, prophesied 700 years before the Incarnation "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:22). These words are eternal because they originate from the eternal God and we are here today to witness His message.

We have observed the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and we have the Day of Ascension to observe in a few weeks followed by the day of Pentecost. The Ascension of Jesus took place 40 days after the Resurrection and ten day later is Pentecost. Acts 1:9-11 record the Ascension.

9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

 11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Many see the symbolic connection of 40 days as a reflection upon Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness, Moses’ spending 40 days on the mountain to receive the Law, 40 years the Hebrews spent in the wilderness and the 40-year reign of king David to be a divine appointed time. The day of Pentecost is 50 days after the Resurrection and ten days after the Ascension.

We need to always remember the direct connection with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the historic Jewish Passover in Egypt when God passed over the homes that had applied lamb’s blood on the door’s lintel and the two doorposts (Exodus 12:22) therefore, sparing the life of the first born. In Exodus 11 this last plague is recorded.

God told Moses “about midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, 5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well” (Exodus 11:4,5; 12:12-13).).

For this event God commanded the Hebrews to have a permanent day of remembrance for the day He brought them out of Egypt (Exodus 12:14-20). This is the “Feast of Unleavened Bread.”

23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; but when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to strike you. 24 And you shall keep this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. 25 When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has [y]promised, you shall keep this rite. 26 And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ 27 then you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord because He passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’” And the people bowed low and worshiped.

Remember, before Moses came that it was Pharoah who had ordered all the Hebrew male babies to be killed (Exodus 1:15-22). During the last plague God moved over the land of Egypt and all the first born died who did not have lamb’s blood on their doorway. This was the last plaque God brought upon Pharoah and the people of Egypt forcing them to allow the Hebrews to leave. The biblical text depicts God (called destroyer) is the one who struck the last plague. In Exodus 12:23 the text reads “the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.”

This summation of the well-known Hebrew history details that the Egyptian Passover took place about 1400 years before the Resurrection. How did the Hebrews celebrate Passover in ancient times to the time of Christ? The Passover observance included the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, which was roasted and eaten at the Seder on the first night of the holiday week. This was the practice until the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the 70 A.D.

One eternal teaching we receive from the Egyptian Passover is that God moved in the affairs of men (Hebrews). This is a miracle. From this God intervention. . . God did not want the Hebrew people to forget what He did for them that they could never do for themselves. Therefore, the Passover observance was given to them so they would not forget and God’s intervention will be perpetually passed down through successive generations for all time. In fact, through the 1400-year era from the time of the last plague. . . the Hebrews went through the period of the Judges, three kings of the United Monarch (Saul, David, Solomon), the first temple built by Solomon, the splitting of the country after Solomon’s death. . . North (Israel), South (Judah), with northern Israel destroyed in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians, and by 586 B.C. Judah taken into the Babylonian captivity for 75 years and the Temple was destroyed. Then the Babylonian return and building of the Second Temple by 515 B.C. Half a millennium later God intervenes another Passover by incarnating himself as Jesus the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53, whose blood will be posted on the souls of men for God to Passover their sins and they will live.

Now let us take a look at the Jewish holy day of Pentecost, observed 50 days after Passover.

Pentecost (Jewish: Shavuot; Exodus 23:16) was a thanksgiving for the *firstfruits* of the wheat harvest, however after the second temple was destroyed by the Romans the day associated with a remembrance of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:12-18). Here is an online article about the Jewish day of Pentecost.

2024 International Fellowship of Christians and Jews

A Spiritual Shift

With the destruction of the Second Temple and the expulsion of the Jewish people from their land in 70 A.D.
the celebration focused more on the anniversary of the giving of the Torah to Moses at Mt. Sinai — which also fell 50 days after the first day of Passover.

More than 3,000 years ago, after leaving Egypt on the night of Passover, the Jews traveled to the Sinai desert. There, they experienced divine revelation as God gave the Jewish people His Law. In Deuteronomy 4:10–13, Moses reminded the people of that experience:

“Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb [Sinai]… You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the LORD spoke… He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.”

The two holidays, Passover and Shavuot, are linked by more than just their proximity. The Exodus from Egypt, which Passover celebrates, marked the beginning of physical freedom for the Jewish people. But Shavuot is a reminder for the Jews that physical liberation was incomplete without the spiritual redemption represented by receiving God’s Law.

Shavuot is also called Atzeret, meaning “the completion,” because together with Passover it forms the completion of a unit. Jews gained their freedom from Egypt on Passover in order to receive the Torah on Shavuot.

https://www.ifcj.org/learn/jewish-holidays/what-is-shavuot-the-jewish-pentecost

I make the observation that the shift within Judaism concerning the emphasis on the day of Pentecost came after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the start of the Jewish era called Rabbinic Judaism.

Rabbinic Judaism is generally defined as Jewish beliefs and practices outlined in the Torah, the written Law (1st 5 books of the Hebrew Bible: Gensis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The Torah is interpreted by the rabbis who incorporate oral traditions handed down from Moses at Sinai. Therefore, the use of the word “Torah”, under Rabbinic Judaism includes the entire corpus of Jewish law. This includes the Written and the Oral Law.

So, after the destruction of the Temple the Jews were dispersed through the region fleeing from Roman annihilation. Remember, Jesus prophesied that the Temple would be torn down (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6). There was no longer a central location like the Temple and the religious leadership that had consisted of the Sanhedrin, Sadducees, Pharisees and Scribes. . . to hold Judaism together. Therefore, the local Rabbi became the hub that the Jewish communities could form around. At the same time Jesus’ lead disciples became the people to stay close. Even though Peter, James, and Paul were all martyred before 68 A.D. their written letters God had them write became the eyewitness accounts of the Gospel Message of Jesus, the risen Christ.

We have just taken a look into the Jewish side of life after the Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, (50 days after the Cross) and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (37 years after the Cross). History reveals a new ear for Jews and for those who chose to follow the risen Jesus Christ. By 70 A.D. a strong case can be made that the letters (21 of 27 New Testament Books) of Paul (13), Peter (2), Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts (2), James, Jude were all in circulation being preached and read by thousands within those years.

It is known that the disciples upon Jesus’ arrest. . . ran away, not wanting to be arrested by the Roman and Jewish authorities. But Scripture tells us that the disciples (including many women) went to Jesus’ tomb and witnessed the stone rolled away and the tomb to be empty. Then these same people. . . being Mary, Martha Peter, John, and the other disciples were eyewitnesses to the resurrection appearances of Jesus in Jerusalem and Galilee (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20).

Remember that these men who wrote these twenty-one letters had witnessed the three and one-half-year teaching-miracle ministry of Jesus. They lived through Jesus’ arrest, trials, crucifixion, resurrection, appearances and ascension. Then they waited in Jerusalem to be empowered by God’s Holy Spirit as Jesus directed them.

Luke 24:49-51

49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." 50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

**AMEN**