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RESTORING THE ECCLESIAL IDENTITY OF THE PASSOVER MEAL: ON ACTS 20:6-7 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

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Abstract

The traditional Christian interpretation of Acts 15:19–21 in the so-called New Testament is that new believers in the faith are no longer to adhere to the laws of the Torah (found in the so-called Old Testament) in light of the life and ministry of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah (Christ). Pronomianism, the revived and emerging pro-Torah hermeneutic, contends the opposite, interpreting that the four laws cited in the passage of Acts is the starting point of the Gentile's relationship to the Torah, the divine legal foundation of their pronomian sanctification as they depart from their previous beliefs and worldview. This contention is strengthened, for Acts 15:21 calls on such believers to engage in the remainder of the laws of the Torah, for "Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21). One such commandment was observance of the appointed festival called Passover (Pesach). Gentile Christians were instructed to observe the Passover centuries before the birth of Yeshua (Exod 12:49; Num 9:14; cf. Exod 12:43–47) and while Acts 2:42–46 does not specifically speak of appointed festivals (as it speaks of table fellowship), it is a topic further enlarged in the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 11:17–34). In the Gospels and Epistles of the apostle Paul, readers encounter what has been traditionally termed as the "Lord's Supper" (also known as "Communion") being an allegedly new tradition instituted by Yeshua that substituted the appointed festival of the Passover. Hence, the traditional interpretation is that after Acts 20:6–7, the passage in 1



Corinthians 11:17–34 teaches that the “ceremonial” laws are no longer operative in the life of a believer, reflected in how Paul adopted the language of the meal and applied it to the “Lord’s Supper,” connecting it with the “new” covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31. It is this paper’s contention that the Passover was not abrogated in the so-called New Testament (henceforth Greek Scriptures) and was to remain an annual festival in which one component of the meal was interpretively enlarged to encompass the theological importance of the life, death, and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah, rather than being replaced by a new tradition called the “Lord’s Supper,” thus restoring the ecclesial identity of its perpetual observance.

Keywords: Communion, Eucharist, Passover, Pronomianism, Acts 15, Lord’s Supper, breaking bread, table fellowship, biblical festivals, 1 Corinthians 11.

In traditional Christian scholarship, most scholars agree that there were four cups (first: sanctification, second: deliverance, third: redemption, and fourth: praise) consumed throughout the appointed festival of Passover (Pesach).¹ Though centuries after the first century events regarding the life of Messiah Yeshua,² the late fourth to early fifth century Jerusalem Talmud speculates the nature of each cup:

Why do we have four cups of wine? R. Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Benayah, this refers to four stages in the redemption... “I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt.” Even if He had left us in Egypt to be slaves, He would have ceased the burdensome yoke. For this alone we would have been grateful to Him and therefore we drink the first cup. “I will deliver you from their slavery.” We drink the cup of salvation for he delivered us completely from serving them. “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm...” Because he confused them and crushed them on our behalf so that they could no longer afflict us, we drink the third cup. “I will take you...” The greatest aspect of the redemption is that He brought us near to Him and granted us also spiritual redemption. For this we raise the fourth cup.³

It has been interpreted by traditional Christianity that the prophecy of Jeremiah (31:31-34) would begin its fulfillment during the Passover meal observed by Yeshua the Messiah on the eve of His betrayal by Judas Iscariot and subsequent arrest and trial (Luke 22:14–23). While one cannot be dogmatic about this interpretation of the cups and whether this understanding was present during the first century, it does appear to align with the events documented in the gospels, in particular when Yeshua redemptively attributes His forthcoming sacrifice to the third cup (cf. Luke 22:20). The Passover and its meal were one of the most important of the “Lord’s appointed times which shall [be] proclaim[ed] as holy convocations—[His] appointed times” (Lev 23:2) and one of the three major pilgrimage festivals that all Israel-born believers were expected to attend and practice (Exod 23:14–17), which even included Gentile believers (Exod 12:49;

¹ I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper & Lord’s Supper* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1980), 21–23, 179.

² Unless citing from Scripture (NASB95) or a source (primary or secondary), I will refer to Jesus by His Hebrew name, Yeshua. Likewise, unless contextually unnecessary or citing another’s work, God will be referred to by His personal name, YHWH (יהוה). This name can be translated as YHVH yet is more accurately, YHWH, as the letter waw appears to be older than vav.

³ Summarised, YHWH will bring them out of the land of Egypt, deliver them, redeem them, and take them away to a new land. Quoted from Eliyahu Kitov’s *The Book of Our Heritage* (Jerusalem Israel: Feldheim, 1988), 2.269. One must be discerning when considering teaching after the closing of the biblical canon and reading them back into the first century. “Many conclusions about worship in the New Testament... are arrived at only by assuming that liturgical customs found in later centuries must have been in continuous existence from the first century... [A]re we justified in making such a connection? While it is certainly possible that in some cases a line of historical continuity may run from New Testament times to liturgical practises of later ages, there are enough instances where recent scholarship is able to demonstrate the improbability of such a trajectory... as to make all similar speculation highly risky.” Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (Oxford, UK: University Press, 2002), 51.



Num 9:14; cf. Exod 12:43–47). This event recorded in the gospel accounts was indeed a Passover meal.⁴ Throntveit helpfully summarizes the cases favouring the view that the meal recorded was that of Passover:

[1] The explicit statements in the synoptic Gospels that this was the case... [2] The meal took place at night as commanded for the Passover... [3] The participants reclined instead of the normal mealtime posture of sitting... [4] A dish preceded the breaking of bread... [5] Red wine was drunk, as prescribed for Passover... [6] The meal ended with a hymn, which points to the Hallel at the end of the Passover meal... [7] After the meal Jesus went to Gethsemane, not to Bethany. Bethany was outside the area to which one might go on Passover night, but Gethsemane was not... [8] The words of institution remind us that the presider at the seder explained its significance.... [9] The words, "to give something to the poor" (John 13:29) may point to a giving of alms... [and 10] The arguments against it may all be fairly disputed.⁵

This frames the contention that the Passover meal was front and centre in the mind of Messiah Yeshua and that His actions were within that context, not that of establishing a new festival or ordinance as has been contended by traditional Christianity.

Messiah Yeshua's last Passover meal (Matt 26:17–30, Mark 14:12–26, Luke 22:7–30) became known as the "Lord's Supper" (cf. 1 Cor 11:23–26) and, on very rare occasions, was referred to as the "breaking of bread" (1 Cor 10:16–17).⁶ Post-Scripture, it became known as "Communion" and it was taught that Yeshua instituted and *replaced* the appointed festival of Passover with this ordinance, being an act of remembrance in which believers are to interpret the bread and wine as symbolically representing His body and blood being sacrificed in order to pay for their sins. It commemorated their liberation from the slavery of sin and believers are no longer expected to observe the appointed festivals of their spiritual ancestors. Allison summarizes the standard definition of the ordinance as:

[T]he Lord's Supper, also referred to as (Holy) Communion (1 Cor 10:16–17), the Eucharist (Greek *eucharistia* = "thanksgiving"), the breaking of bread (Matt 26:26; 1 Cor 11:24), and other names. Scripture addresses this rite in only two places: Jesus's institution at his last supper (Matt 26:26–29 and parallels) and Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians (10:14–22; 11:17–34). In the early church, only baptized believers in proper relationship to Christ could participate in this ordinance, which was celebrated weekly.⁷

In studying the background to this passage, one sees a radical substitution of the appointed festival of Passover (which included the element of eating) with "Communion." It is contended by most scholars and pastors that the "ceremonial" laws are no longer operative⁸ in the life of a believer and that the apostle Paul *adopted the language* of the Passover and applied it to the newly instituted practice (cf. 1 Cor 5:8), connecting it with the "new" covenant prophesied in

⁴ Marshall, *Last Supper*, 55–75. Reinhartz insists that the meal wasn't due to the absence of the consumption of lamb, but this is clearly intended to be intentional, as Yeshua Himself is the lamb being consumed. Adele Reinhartz, "The Gospel According to John," *The Jewish Annotated New Testament – NRSV*, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 184.

⁵ Mark A. Throntveit, "The Lord's Supper as New Testament, Not New Passover," *Lutheran Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1997), 276–77. Throntveit does list the arguments against, but few are strong in their contention. Additionally, he appears frustrated at the perceived inability to harmonize the "synoptic" gospels with John's gospel, particularly this meal (and forthcoming crucifixion), but this is not as difficult as scholarship contends. The "Passover Hypothesis" answers this. Consult: Tim Hegg, "The Chronology of the Crucifixion: A Comparison of the Gospel Accounts," *TorahResource*. <https://tr-pdf.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/articles/chronology-of-the-crucifixion.pdf>; Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015).

⁶ Ultradispensationalists, Quakers, and the Salvation Army do not practice the ordinance.

⁷ Gregg A. Allison, "The Ordinances of the Church," *The Gospel Coalition* (n.d.), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-ordinances-of-the-church/>. It is ironic that this term is used of Communion, as ordinances (δόγμα, *dógma*) in Scripture are always man-made commands, decrees, or customs (Luke 2:1; Acts 16:4, 17:7; LXX Esther 4:8, 9:1; Daniel 6:12) and have nothing to do with *scriptural commands*.

⁸ The irony of Communion is that it upholds a theological concept discarded by traditional Christianity: ceremony. With one side of the mouth, it purports that ceremonial laws have been abolished, yet on the other, tearing it from the appointed festival of Passover, contends that this ceremony is permissible (even superseding) the former. That is exegetically dishonest.



Jeremiah 31.⁹ Traditional Christianity interprets that most of the laws in the Torah as preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) are no longer necessary in the wake of the Messiah's death and resurrection and that in "fulfilling" the laws of Torah, He abrogated most (if not all) of them.¹⁰ Senn's comment summarizes this view:

The annual reactualization of the Exodus is not the same for Christians as it is for Jews. The passover of Christ from death to life fulfills all the types of redemption. Christians experience the Exodus and the crossing of the sea by conversion from the old life to the new in the waters of baptism. The Christian Passover is not a night spent in eating and drinking, but in fasting and meditation on the mighty acts of God in salvation history, culminating in the announcement of the resurrection and the celebration of baptism. The message of Easter morning is not just that Christ is risen from the dead but "If ye then be risen *with* Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col 3:1). The feast which breaks the fast is celebrated on the morning of an anticipated new creation. The fullness of the paschal mystery is not experienced in an ersatz Seder meal, no matter how sincerely celebrated; it is experienced by entering into the eschatological passage rehearsed by the Easter Vigil and actualized in the celebration of holy baptism and the Eucharistic meal.¹¹

While pronomian Christianity slowly revives itself within the halls of academia, being a pro-Torah hermeneutic,¹² its call for observance of the appointed festivals favours a continuity of the Passover meal rather than understanding it as a newly created tradition in the first century AD.¹³ There are several arguments as to why the apostle Paul fully intended for his readers to understand that observance of the Passover remained in the life of a believer, redeemed Jew and Gentile in Messiah alike.

Prior to exploring his epistle to the Corinthian church, it is important to explore two passages in the book of Acts that are said to speak of these matters: Acts 2:42-46 and Acts 20:6-7. The first passage reads as follows:

⁹ Marshall, *Last Supper*, 76–80, 147.

¹⁰ As summarised in Jonathan Klawans, "The Law," *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 515-518. I recommend the reader consult my work on pronomianism to counter these traditional interpretations.

¹¹ Frank C. Senn, "The Lord's Supper, Not the Passover Seder," *Worship* 60, no. 4 (1986), 368.

¹² Benjamin Szumskyj, *The Laws of Torah in the Sanctification of the Modern Christian: A Brief Introduction to Pronomianism* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2026). In my book, I propose that the Torah can be applied today in two ways; a) literally, meaning that what has been written can be applied in any culture or environment and is not bound by time, due to its straightforward understanding and ability to be practised, and b) non-literally, meaning that it cannot be applied directly due to a temporary suspension enacted by YHWH (i.e., the Levitical priesthood) or the absence of a component dependent on the commandment being fulfilled as is (e.g., the physical Temple), a principle or paradigm can be extracted and applied. This model is not a new creation, but rather, evidenced by Scripture itself. For example, there are times when the apostle Paul literally applied the laws of the Torah (Acts 21:17-24; Gal. 5:3) and there are times in which he did so by way of principle (1 Tim. 5:17-18). To read more about pronomian Christianity, consult: Tim Hegg, *There Shall Be One Law: A Biblical Defense of One Law Theology* (University Place, WA: TorahResource, 2025); Gregory Scott McKenzie, *Walking Orderly, Keeping the Law: A Pronomian Pocket Guide to Acts 21:20-26* (Clover, SC: Pronomian Publishing, 2024); Benjamin Szumskyj, *Love and the Law: A Pronomian Pocket Guide to John 14:15* (Clover, SC: Pronomian Publishing, 2025); and Benjamin Szumskyj and David Wilber, eds., *An Introduction to Pronomianism: Essays on One Torah Theology in Modern Christianity* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2026).

¹³ In maintaining the term ordinance (over tradition), Ryrie notes the difficulty in defining ordinances *scripturally*, saying many "restrict the ordinances to those ordered by Christ to be administered in the church [... By] this kind of definition baptism and the Lord's Supper are clearly ordinances, though foot-washing might also be... [If] an ordinance may be more broadly conceived (yet within the parameters of being God-ordained and related to the church) then marriage and the rite of praying for the sick... might also be considered ordinances... [as marriage] was God-ordained and symbolizes the important relationship between Christ and the church, and praying for the sick involves the church through its elders." See: Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Faith* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1999), 487. Allison defines their natures as "infus[ing] grace *ex opere operato* (by their administration) into the people of God[,] are means of grace by which God confers the benefits of salvation to his people[, and] symbolize the faith and obedience of the people of God." See: Gregg A. Allison, "The Ordinances of the Church," *The Gospel Coalition* (n.d.), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-ordinances-of-the-church/>. While seemingly helpful, this cannot be so succinctly extracted from the Scriptures.



They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart...

This passage has two traditional interpretations; one eisegetical and one exegetical. The first reads *into* the text that the reference to "breaking of bread" has to do with "Communion," based on the repeated phrase in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. The second reads it as relating to table fellowship, based on Acts 27:35 and other verses in Scripture in which the same grammatical understanding is also intended. While the former theological conclusion is understandable, it heavily relies on the assumption that by the time of the events described in Acts 2, the ordinance of "Communion" was thoroughly established throughout the Christian world. This seems highly unlikely, particularly as believers were still gathering at the Temple (Acts 2:46) and in local synagogues (James 2:2). That the "apostles' *fellowship* and *breaking of bread* was a sharing of possessions to meet needs and of lives in common meals"¹⁴ is further strengthened by the fact that this was a daily occurrence, according to v.46 (and possibly v.42). It was intended to strengthen a familial *spiritual* community, for eating meals was natural to the rhythm of life.¹⁵ This is the original Hebraic understanding.¹⁶ Furthermore, to infer that v.42 and v.46 were speaking of two different types of breaking of bread or that "Communion" was a daily observance, is exegetically difficult to comprehend. As Holladay notes

"Eating together" (*tē klasei tou artou*, v. 42) may refer to the observance of a cultic meal honoring Jesus as Lord (cf. Luke 24:30, 35). Similar wording is used in Acts 2:46 (*klōntes . . . artou*). Eucharistic meals may be in view, but the following phrase "they took nourishment" (*metelambanon trophēs*) suggests regular meals (cf. 20:11; 27:35–38).¹⁷

Squires affirms that

the *breaking of bread* (2:42, 46), was a custom of Jesus (Luke 9:16; 22:19; 24:35). While 2:46 makes it clear that this was a daily practice of the Jerusalem community, there is no further reference to the breaking of bread in this section. However, the sharing of meals is inferred at various points in the ensuing narrative (10:23; 11:12; 16:14–15, 34; 18:7). Later references demonstrate that "the breaking of bread" remained a practice of Paul, at least in Troas (20:7) and on board ship (27:35).¹⁸

Finally, Osbourne notes that both

¹⁴ William Larkin Jr., *Acts: IVP New Testament Commentary* (Westmont, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 61. He later infers that it is possible to see a primitive integration of the meal which Yeshua had partaken prior to His betrayal: "Daily the community broke bread together in homes-sharing a meal, beginning it with the bread and ending it with the cup of the Lord's Supper (Lk 22:19-20; 24:35; Acts 20:7, 11). With constant intimacy, exultant joy and transparency of relationship they enjoyed the graces of Messiah's salvation in a true anticipation of his banquet in the kingdom (Lk 22:30; compare Acts 16:34)."

¹⁵ "The believers continued to meet in the Temple for prayer and witness (Luke 24.53). But Luke does not tell us how much they were involved in the temple services. On the other hand, they 'broke bread . . . and ate their food' at home, i.e. they had their fellowship meals at various houses. The 'house' was the most important space for the Early Church: apostolic teaching, daily fellowship, prayer and worship (5.42; 8.3; 11.14; 16.15, 31–32; 18.8; 20.20). The 'glad and generous hearts' also looks back to their willingness to share their possessions." Yon-Gyong Kwon, *ISG 48: A Commentary on Acts* (London, UK: SPCK Publishing, 2012), 58.

¹⁶ "In Lutheran usage, the breaking of bread is a metonymy for the Lord's Supper (Luke 24:35; cf. Luke 22:19). This is a Christian formulation, since in the Jewish context, breaking of bread refers only to the opening rite of a meal (with thanksgiving and distribution of bread). Daniel Marguerat, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Germany, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022), 113. My translation from the German. See also: Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Germany, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 115.

¹⁷ Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 108.

¹⁸ John T. Squires, *Acts: Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2003), 37.



the breaking of bread and then prayers are the result of teaching and aspects of the fellowship of the church. It is common to think of this as eucharistic worship, but it is likely broader than that, referring to table fellowship of all kinds, including fellowship at the Lord's table. Meals were viewed as sharing, first with God (they prayed at both the beginning and end of meals) and then with one another. An amazing number of scenes in the Gospel of Luke were over meals, and this continued in the early church. Meals provided the core of the theme of fellowship, then spreading to include every area of life.¹⁹

Considering the importance of meals as a means of building friendships and relationships, in addition to being an opportunity to share the gospel to invited unbelieving guests, it appears that this passage is speaking of a church growing together socially in the Messiah, as opposed to an implicit reference to an ordinance explicitly spoken of after the close of the canon. The second passage, Acts 20:6-7, reads as follows:

We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

In v.6 the appointed festival of the week of Unleavened Bread is being referred to (Exod 12:14–22, 39; 13:6–7; 23:15; 34:18; Lev 23:6; Num. 28:17–25; Deut 16:3–8, 16; 2 Chron 8:13; 30:21–23; 35:17; Ezra 6:22; Ezek 45:21; Matt 26:17; Mark 14:1–2, 12; Luke 22:1–2, 7; Acts 12:3; 20:6). The statement in v.7, whether referring to an isolated gathering or meal associated with a weekly congregation, does not make any reference to it being “Communion” and, as such, would be a forced reading concluded by eisegetical goals. It is also likely that the apostle Paul was using the Jewish reckoning of time and thus more likely to have been on Saturday after Sabbath had come to an end than the Sunday (as most commentators have contended).

This reference to Paul's observation of the appointed festivals raises another issue no commentary has asked of the text. If Paul taught that “Communion” was a first century established ordinance that was extracted from, or wholly replaced, Passover, then why observe the festival at all?²⁰ This is a genuine question. Its place in the life of a believer would be made redundant. Any suggestion that this was done to appease Jewish Christian sensitivities or open the door to bilateral sanctification (or worse, bilateral ecclesiology),²¹ is disingenuous. Consider the inconsistent conclusions of the often sound Keener:

That Paul, Luke, and others remained in Philippi for the days of the Unleavened Bread instead of crossing to Troas immediately to rejoin their companions (Acts 20:5–6) suggests that they continued to observe Jewish festivals. That such festivals remained quite familiar to at least Jewish Christians in the late first century... suggests that Christians preserved many of these customs longer than Gentile Christendom of many later centuries has often assumed... It is unlikely that either Luke or Paul preserved such designations (cf. also 12:3–4; 27:9) as merely chronological markers; although Paul did not require Gentile Christians to keep festivals (Rom 14:5–6; Gal 4:9–10), he did assume their knowledge of them (1 Cor 16:8), presupposing some theological instruction about them (5:7–8).²²

As noted earlier, this statement disregards the laws of Torah that instruct Gentile Christians to observe the appointed festivals, while it is possible to provide a rebuttal for the broad claim that Paul “did not require Gentiles to keep

¹⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA; Lexham Press, 2019), 60–61.

²⁰ In “1 Cor 5:7–8... [h]ere we see reflected, not only the biblical ceremonies of purging the house of leaven (see Exod 12:15) and sacrificing the Passover lamb, but also a warning against letting the paschal feast become an occasion for dissipation.” Joel Marcus, “Passover and Last Supper Revisited,” *New Testament Studies*, vol. 59, no. 3 (2013), 321.

²¹ For an excellent rebuttal, see: Tim Hegg, *I Will Build My Ekklesia: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (Tacoma, WA: Torah Resource, 2009), 107–122.

²² Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1–23:35* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2959–2960.



festivals.”²³ More so, if it is unlikely that Jewish Christians “preserved such designations... as merely chronological markers,” how does that marry with the often negative rhetoric that the laws of the Torah, especially those mislabelled “ceremonial,” were not nailed to the cross or no longer to burden the believer in Messiah? Such inconsistencies can only be exegetically ironed out by maintaining a view of continuity and a pro-Torah hermeneutic.

In having briefly explored these passages from the book of Acts, it is imperative to explore Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians and to test the contention that references to so-called “Communion” are valid or whether an interpretation of continuity favours the appointed festival, in order to restore the ecclesial identity of the Passover meal. Contending that 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is speaking of “Communion” and reading that back into Acts 2:42-46 must be an airtight case, for it to be upheld as scriptural and observed in the local church.

The first argument *surrounds the description of the meal in 1 Corinthians 5:8*. While the apostle Paul was known to use the language of the Temple when describing believers (e.g., 1 Cor 6:19), he never inferred that they replaced it, and he would always speak plainly regarding the appointed festivals. He spoke about the festival of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6) and Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9) as literal realities that he still observed, well after the resurrection and ascension of Messiah Yeshua.²⁴ Patterson rightly notes that “Paul’s reference appears to be not a text, but his own actual experiences of celebrating the Passover.”²⁵ Any notion of supersessionism²⁶ is foreign to his mindset and choice of words. Patterson earlier states that “[t]he strength of Passover imagery occurs not merely in its explicit use, but in its resonance with all of the cultic metaphors and with language related to some of their entailments, such as eating, freedom and slavery, covenant, cleanness, belonging, holiness, and community.”²⁷ Shifting the language of a perpetual festival²⁸ to that of a newly created ordinance would be an inconsistent exegetical application by the apostle and would have resulted in his condemnation by the Pharisees throughout the books of Acts. However, no such claim is made, as noted by Friedman:

[I]f breaking the Torah or the mitzvot was a main reason for antagonism against the movement, we should expect to see this recorded in the New Testament...[however, Acts 4:1–4, 5–22; 5:17; 6:8; 8:3; 9:2, 23; 12:1, and 21:27–29] demonstrates that there was no valid charge of Torah-breaking in any of the above passages[;] if any type of Torah-breaking had been advocated, either in teaching or lifestyle, we should have read of protests against it... we do not see this (outside of one false charge that is not investigated any further according to the text)... [so,] whatever reasons are given for the prejudices against the first-century Messianic movement, Torah-breaking was *not* one of them.²⁹

²³ Again, consult: Szumskyj, *The Laws of Torah*. For specific commentaries of a pro-Torah hermeneutic, consult: Tim Hegg, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* – Volume 1 & 2 (Tacoma, WA: Torah Resource, 2005 & 2007); *ibid.*, *Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Tacoma, WA: Torah Resource, 2010); M. I. Cha, *Misunderstanding Galatians: An Exegetical, Originalist Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021).

²⁴ Dumm tries his hardest to see both continuity and discontinuity in the Passover and “Eucharist.” He writes: “On its deepest symbolic level, the Passover ritual has been for Israel an annual opportunity to renew the decision of faith by which they originally put behind them the illusion of safety in a familiar past and moved resolutely into the unknown future of God’s mystery and promise. The Christian eucharist certainly has retained and reaffirmed this primordial meaning. Jesus did not flee from Gethsemane but embraced his destiny and freely entered the ‘wilderness’ of the Calvary experience beyond which he discovered the wondrous promised land of resurrection life.” See: Demetrius R. Dumm, “Passover and Eucharist,” *Worship* 61, no. 3 (1987), 207.

²⁵ Jane Lancaster Patterson, *Keeping the Feast: Metaphors of Sacrifice in 1 Corinthians and Philippians* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 131.

²⁶ This is the teaching that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan; among the different views of the relationship between the church and Israel are the church has replaced Israel (Replacement Theology), the church is an expansion of Israel (Covenant Theology), or the church is completely different and distinct from Israel (Dispensational Theology).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁸ Being a “duration of time, which is concealed, as being of an unknown or great length, with respect to time either past, present, or to come.” William Wilson, “Perpetual,” *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 308. While the word perpetual does not always infer a permanent ongoing reality, contextually, this appears to be the primary interpretation.

²⁹ David Friedman, *They Loved the Torah: What Yeshua’s Followers Really Thought About the Law* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2001), 99–100. Harnik affirms that “Paul nowhere suggests that *Jews* should reject their Torah observance, and in fact seems to assume



The second argument is that *1 Corinthians 11:24–26 speaks not of an insinuation of repetition but in accordance with the annual nature of the Passover meal*. While many early post-Scripture writings detail the practice of the “Lord’s Supper” with great frequency, there are exceptions. The phrase “[t]his cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor 11:25)³⁰ can be read to infer that, *as often as you drink the Passover wine, do so in remembrance of the Messiah*. This was not a licence to observe the Passover meal multiple times a year (though there was scriptural concession to celebrate a second Passover under particular circumstances; Num 9:9–12).³¹ Likewise, remembrance was an expected part of the Passover meal (Exod 12:26–27; cf. 12:14). That Messiah Yeshua attributes remembrance of Himself and what He has done, enlarging the appointed festival’s purpose, it does not change the frequency of its practice by the people of YHWH. *Remembrance is understood as loyalty, not chronology*. Patterson echoes similar sentiments:

Appropriate proclamation of the death of this Christ occurs precisely in *how* the community eats and drinks together ([1 Cor] 11:26), and whether or not all of their actions are “for” (ὕπὲρ) one another... the capstone is set on this argument when Paul says, within his “hymn” to love in chapter 13, that “Love is *not* puffed up” (οὐ φυσιοῦται, 13:4)[.] Love, spelled out in all of its actions, perfectly characterizes the unleavened community.³²

The speculation of 1 Corinthians 13 being hymnal in nature connects the Corinthian passage with the Hallel psalms sung at Passover (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26). Furthermore, Luke 22 refers to Passover (πάσχα) six times. No other appointed festival is established or substituted with another, in this passage. Messiah Yeshua desired to celebrate “this” (Luke 22:15) Passover with His disciples, and it is this appointed festival, with its elements of wine (22:17) and bread (22:19), that He states believers are to do “this in remembrance of Me.” It is “this” (οὗτος) meal, this appointed festival Passover, that believers are to remember, for Messiah Yeshua enlarged its meaning and purpose. No part of it is to be extracted to create a replacement festival or meal. It is no surprise that one reads parallels with this chapter and Exodus 12 in the Septuagint translation, in which one reads of the origins of Passover. Here one finds the word “this” (οὗτος) relating to Passover referenced several times (12:14, 17, 24, 25, 26, 42, 43, 47). What Messiah Yeshua is calling believers to remember is the meaning integrated into this appointed festival which is to remain as an annual observance.³³ It was never to be domesticated.³⁴ Conybeare and Howson echo these sentiments when they write:

that they would and should remain committed to it (1 Cor. 7:17-20; cf. Gal. 5:3; Acts 21:17-24).” Douglas Harnik, *Paul Among the Postliberals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 219.

³⁰ Interestingly, according to Lander, “Rabbinic literature links the redemptive aspect of the blood circumcision to that of the blood of the paschal lamb based on a reinterpretation of Ezek 16:6, ‘in your blood, live!’ recited during both circumcision ceremonies and Passover seders (b. Eruv. 19a; Tg. Heh. Ezek 16:6).” Shira Lander, “The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians,” *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 305. Circumcision is a one-time event and though not remembered annually, like a birthday, the ceremony of Brit Milah (or “bris”) is referenced each year in the annual Torah-reading cycle, the Parashat Lech Lecha (Gen 17:10-14).

³¹ While not advocating for the Passover meal to remain instead of the “Lord’s Supper,” DeHaan argues “by separating the sacrament of communion from a meal diminishes its true meaning and turns a celebration into a ritual[.] If we are to enjoy communion the way God intended, we need to make it part of a meal, not as a separate ceremony.” He adds that “If you want to disassociate the phrase ‘as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup’ from the annual practice of Passover, then the only interpretation indicates every time you have a meal. That means we should practice communion each time we sit down to eat. That’s three times a day. And if we practice communion that often, we run the risk of it becoming a meaningless ritual much like the obligatory prayers we say before we eat. However, since the setting was Passover and Passover is an annual event, it’s likely that Jesus intended for us to celebrate communion once a year, [as] an annual holiday.” See: Peter DeHaan, “Why We Shouldn’t Celebrate Communion at Church,” *PeterDeHaan.com*, <https://www.peterdehaan.com/christianity/celebrate-communion-the-right-way/>.

³² Jane Lancaster Patterson, *Keeping the Feast: Metaphors of Sacrifice in 1 Corinthians and Philippians* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 154.

³³ It is interesting that the Aramaic Bible in Plain English translation renders 1 Cor 11:25 as “So after they had dined, he also gave the cup, and he said, ‘This cup is The New Covenant in my blood. You shall be so doing every time that you drink for my Memorial.’”

³⁴ Marcus notes that extrabiblical Jewish literature such as Jubilees (e.g., 49:21) contains “sharp polemic... against domestic celebration of Passover [so to] suggest that some Jews known to the author were celebrating the feast at home.” Joel Marcus, “Passover and Last Supper Revisited,” *New Testament Studies*, vol. 59, no. 3 (2013), 308-309.



If we take “as ye are unleavened” in a metaphorical sense, it is scarcely consistent with the previous “cast out the old leaven”; for the passage would then amount to saying, “Be free from leaven (metaphorically) as you are free from leaven (metaphorically);” whereas, on the other view, St. Paul says, “Be free from leaven (metaphorically) as you are free from leaven (literally).” There seems no difficulty in supposing that the Gentile Christians joined with the Jewish Christians in celebrating the Paschal feast after the Jewish manner, at least to the extent of abstaining from leaven in the love-feasts. And we see that St. Paul still observed the “days of unleavened bread” at this period of his life, from Acts [20:]6.³⁵

The third argument is that *the judgement of 1 Corinthians 11:27–32 aligns with Numbers 9:13*. The apostle Paul notes that the believer who “eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord... [and] eats and drinks judgment to himself.” This language is similar to the judgement that befalls believers who do not take the Passover seriously. Moses writes, “the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and yet neglects to observe the Passover, that person shall then be cut off from his people, for he did not present the offering of the Lord at its appointed time. That man will bear his sin” (Num 9:13). Both individuals are approaching the appointed festival in an unworthy manner, in a state in which they have not examined themselves, and to do so is considered sinful. Likewise, the introspection of 1 Cor 11:28 is echoed by Philo of Alexandria, who notes that in observing the Passover, “the whole life of a good person is the equivalent of a feast (ἑορτή) held by one who has expelled grief and fear and desire and the other passions and maladies of the soul” (Philo, *Spec.* 2.157).³⁶ Paul’s audience would have made this connection. It is difficult to contend that they chose to reject the judgement of *Numbers 9:13* attributed to a perpetual commandment, only to accept the judgement of *1 Corinthians 11:27–32* from a newly created ordinance (if one is to affirm “Communion”).

The fourth argument is that the Passover was not replaced by the “Last Supper,” rather, *Messiah Yeshua enlarged the purpose and meaning of the appointed festival*. The symbolic meanings attributed to the bread and wine were to be embedded in the annual meal. Sichel perfectly states this view:

Christ takes each one of these old covenant sacraments, and provides them with their final and completed meaning. Instead of abolishing them, he takes each *Jewish* rite and provides it with the fullness that God had always intended it to have. This corresponds to the argument of the writer of Hebrews. “Hebrews claims for itself the image of a *liturgy*, a symbolic action in the sacred sphere: more particularly, a *covenant-renewal rite*, of which the book’s words comprise a long prophetic exhortation . . . a reinterpretation of the symbolism of the old covenant, through a *reapplication* of its symbols in the light of Christ.”... The early Jewish believers did not understand the Old Covenant abolished, and they did not see the sacraments instituted by Christ as *replacements* of the sacraments so long celebrated. In Paul’s discussion of the Eucharist, he references a *specific* bread and cup, “For whenever you eat *this* bread and drink *this* cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26 NIV). The implication is that the early believers continued to understand the Eucharist in the framework of Passover.³⁷

Messiah Yeshua (and His disciples) did not form a new religion but rather renewed the foundations of what the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) taught and enlarged the believer’s understanding of it in light of His death and resurrection and the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, as prophesied in Jeremiah 31.

The fifth and final argument is that *there is a distinction between meals and festival meals (i.e., banquets)*. First Corinthians 11:20–22 and 33–34 make clear that there is a distinction between a meal in a general sense and the meal attached to the Passover. The apostle Paul is not stating in these verses that food is not a part of the observance of remembering Messiah Yeshua in the partaking of bread and wine, but that its presence in the Passover meal as a whole enshrines the entire meal as holy and thus, set apart from other, normal meals. There are meals as a family, meals

³⁵ William Conybeare and John Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Company, 1978), 389–90.

³⁶ Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, 135.

³⁷ Matthew S. Sichel, “Sacraments Reimagined: Fulfillment, Continuity and the New Israel,” *Evangelical Journal* 34, no. 1 (2016), 13. Italics original.



connected to festivals, and meals as a part of fellowship according to Scripture. The latter are referred to as “love feasts” (Jude 1:10, 12; ἀγάπη) and sometimes referred to as “breaking bread” (Acts 2:42, 46; cf. Jer 16:7).³⁸ In noting the word “supper” in the passage (1 Cor 11:20–21, 25), one is to understand that the Messiah’s enlarged meaning to the bread and wine taken in the third stage of the evening indicate that it was a part of a larger meal, namely, a banquet. It was not a brief gathering in which bread and wine were only taken and labeled a “supper;” it was part of a larger consumption of food and wine, the Passover meal. While not advocating for the continuance of the Passover meal over the Lord’s Supper, McGowan notes that δεῖπνον (“banquet” in Greek) “was an evening meal with certain expected formalities and tradition of proper conduct... [they were] purposeful events, held often and but nonetheless distinguished from merely incidental eating... [t]hey were also an integral part of Greco-Roman (including Jewish) sacrifices, since the flesh of animal victims were often consumed straight after ritual slaughter in a festive atmosphere.”³⁹ This speaks directly to the Passover and by extension, other “appointed times” (Lev 23:2). That they were at evening (Exod 12:6; Lev 23:5; Num 9:3) and insisted on the consumption of the entire eaten meal (Exod 12:11) further connects 1 Cor 11:17–34 with Passover.⁴⁰

In consideration of all that has been contended, “Communion” remains an often-practised ordinance in traditional Christianity and there are no indications that any theological discussion will soon take place regarding its origin, nature, and purpose. However, there are theological grounds to revisit its role in the local church, when one studies the Scriptures on which the “institution” was founded and the legitimacy of its substitution with an appointed festival. The Passover was an annual observance to be celebrated as a “perpetual ordinance” (Exod 12:14), not to be substituted by another, but rather, interpretively enlarged so as to encompass the gospel of Messiah Yeshua. As such, there is nothing in the text that indicates the Passover has ended as an appointed festival to be practised by redeemed Jew and Gentile alike.⁴¹ In being enlarged, we are to remember the Messiah’s sacrificial death each time we observe the Passover annually and restore its ecclesial identity as intended by the will of YHWH.

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³⁸ See further comments: Tim Hegg, “Investigation of the Lord’s Table—Passover or Communion?” 10–14, *TorahResource*, <https://tr-pdfs3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/articles/investigation-into-the-lords-supper.pdf>.

³⁹ Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 20.

⁴⁰ McGowan makes a profound statement when he writes that the Lord’s Supper is not used “as a way of talking about the Eucharist itself until the fourth century and the term can be used with a certain holy irony; even then, it is not a name so much as an epithet for the liturgical Eucharist... the tendency of modern scholars to imagine that Paul reflects some wider usage—for which there is no evidence at all—reminds us how influential our own liturgical experience can be in imagining that of the past.” *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴¹ Hegg concludes on these sobering words: “[T]he church, as she moved further and further from her Jewish roots, sought to extract from the Pesach seder (which she no longer wanted to celebrate) those very important words of Yeshua paralleling the wine with His blood, and the bread with His flesh. In so doing, she created a new ceremony in which only the two elements of the seder remained. Since Yeshua had first singled out the bread as typical of His broken body, the church put that element first, and followed it by the cup. She was able to take an intrinsically Jewish ceremony and divest it of any connection to its Hebrew origin, thus making it her own. Once it was distinctively hers, she could add to it without restraint, making it the central and all-important institution of the church by which heretics and believers were distinguished.” See: Hegg, “Investigation.”



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