

THE JEWISH FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



Class XII – Everybody Loves a Party!

April 15, 2017

www.theologicalstraydogs.com



An Introductory Reading

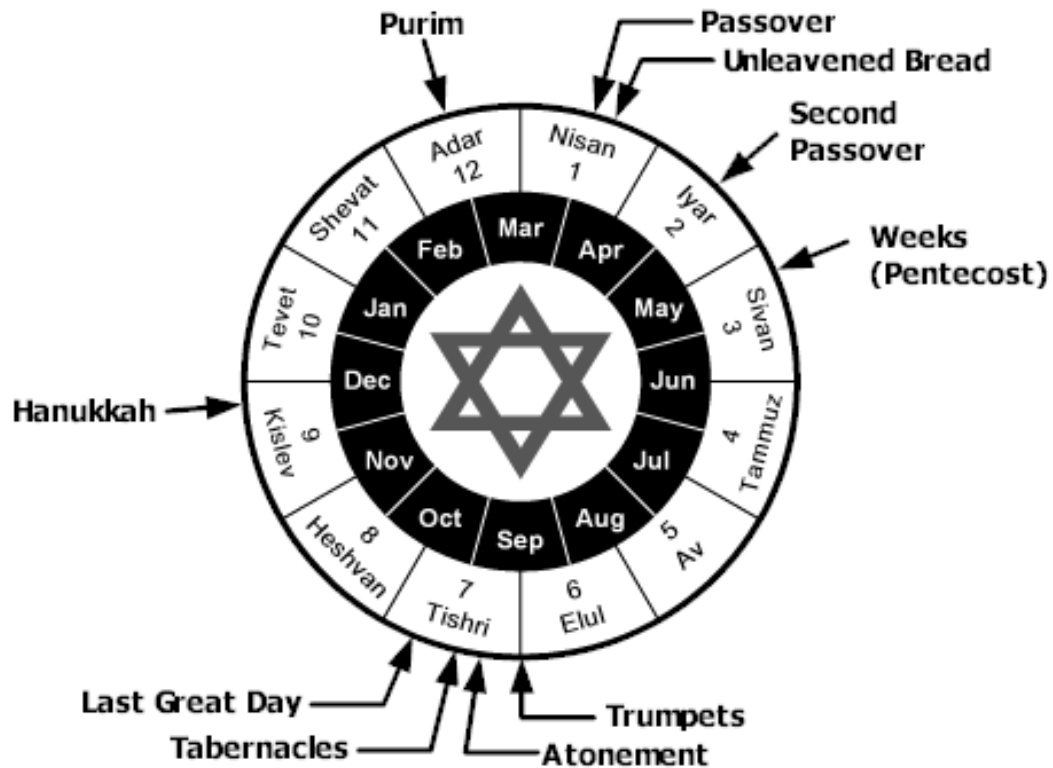
Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities* 7.389 – 391 (late 1st c. CE) –

“With these recommendations to his son, David died...He was a **most excellent man** and possessed of **every virtue** which should be found in a king entrusted with the safety of so many nations; there was **no one like him for bravery**, and, in the contests fought on behalf of his subjects, he was the **first to rush into danger**, encouraging his soldiers against the opposing lines by his labors in the fight, and not commanding them **like a master**. He was also most apt in **perceiving and understanding the course of future events** and in dealing with the immediate situation, **prudent, mild, kind to those in trouble, just and humane** – qualities which **only the greatest kings** are expected to have; and, with so great a measure of authority, never once did he do wrong, **except in the matter of Uriah’s wife**. Moreover he left behind **such wealth** as no other king, whether of the Hebrews or other nations, ever did.”

Praxis in Hellenistic Judaism

- Everyone knew and accepted that certain practices separated Jewish and Gentile identity.
- This fact was commented on by both Jewish and Gentile writers.
- These practices reflected Hellenistic Judaism's interpretation of Torah in light of the covenant identity of the Jewish people.
- The focus on Torah and ethnic practices does not sprout from legalism. The covenant relationship was presupposed by all Hellenistic Jewish writers, even past the New Testament period.

Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity



- Festivals
 - Followed a lunar calendar
 - Used for marking time in the ancient world
 - National symbols of cultural ethnic identity
- Sabbath
 - Most important festival of the year
 - Recalled *YHWH*'s actions at Creation
 - Keeping *shabbat*
 - Gentile views of the Sabbath

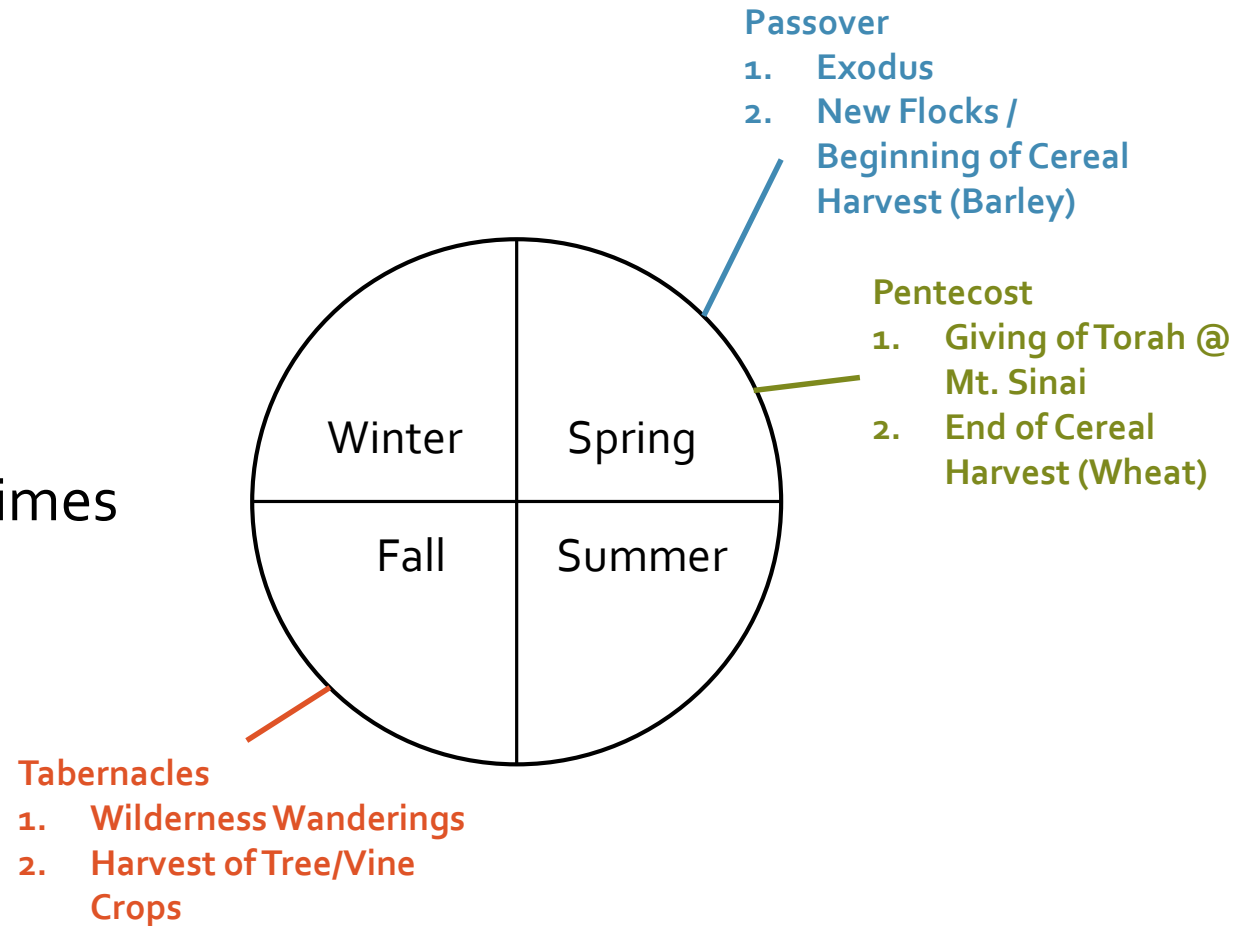
Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity

1st Maccabees 2:31 – 38 (1st c. BCE) –

“And it was reported to the king’s officers, and to the troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that those who had rejected the king’s command had gone down to **the hiding places in the wilderness**. Many pursued them, and overtook them; they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them **on the Sabbath day**. They said to them, ‘Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live.’ But they said, ‘We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and **so profane the Sabbath day**.’ Then the enemy quickly attacked them. But they **did not answer** them or **hurl a stone** against them or **block up their hiding places**, for they said, ‘**Let us all die in our innocence**; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly.’ So they attacked them on the Sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons.”

Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity

- Three Major Annual Festivals
 - Centered around two ideas:
 - Agricultural calendar
 - Religious/national history
 - Pilgrimage festivals
 - Different groups = different times
 - Passover (*Pasach*)
 - Pentecost (*Shavuot*)
 - Tabernacles (*Sukkot*)



Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity

- Passover (*Pasach*)
 - Rescue from Egypt – Ex.12:12 - 13
 - Merged with Feast of Unleavened Bread – Ex. 12:15 – 20
 - Merged with Redemption of First Born – Ex. 13:11 – 13
 - Heavy Roman presence in Jerusalem and conflict
 - Passover Seder – meal to celebrate and pass on central story
 - Not the same meal as today
 - Organized around 4 cups of wine, meal, and Hallel Psalms (113-118)
 - Did Jesus complete the meal or leave 4th cup undrunk? (Mark 14:25)
 - Transformed almost immediately into Lord's Supper / meal fellowship
 - Immediately became the defining lens for Christ's sacrifice

Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity

- Pentecost (*Shavuot*)
 - Also called “Feast of Weeks” – 7 weeks after Passover – Lev. 23:15 – 22
 - Name is Greek, literally “50 days”
 - Gathering of first fruits for offering at Temple
 - Celebrated the provision of Torah at Mt. Sinai
 - Offered two *leavened* loaves of bread
 - Featured in Acts 2 – the Holy Spirit is the “first fruits” of Jesus’ sacrifice



Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity

- Tabernacles (*Sukkot*)
 - Also called “Feast of Booths” or “Feast of *YHWH*” – Lev. 23:39
 - Best attended of the pilgrimage feasts – time of celebration
 - Live in temporary shelters – reminder of wilderness wanderings
 - Two major images:
 - Light – light huge central lamps in the Temple
 - Water – carry water from the Gihon Spring to pour out
 - Read Zech. 14 (cf. vv.6-8)
 - Backdrop of John 7 – 8



Cultural Markers for Jewish Identity

- Other Festivals
 - Hannukah
 - Reading of Ezekiel 34:7 – 10
 - John 10 – “I AM the good shepherd”
 - Rosh Hashanah leading to Yom Kippur
 - 5 days before Tabernacles
 - Fasting, praying, washing, sex forbidden
 - Inside the Temple – incense & blood
 - Outside the Temple - scapegoat
 - Purim
 - Established in Esther (9:20-24)
 - A time of feasting celebrating victory over enemies and sorrow turning to joy

Mosaic with symbols of Hanukah



Small Group Discussion

- Read Esther 7:1 – 10 and Mark 6:17 - 28
- What are the similarities and differences between the two stories?
- What are the outcomes of the two stories? Who ends up dead?
- **IF** the author of Mark is using this as a reference to Purim, what is the message?

Next Week's Homework

- Read John Chapters 7 and 8
- Why would the writer of John spend two whole chapters discussing this feast?
- What does placing him in the context of this feast say about who Jesus is?
- How does this picture of Jesus fit with the message of other passages in the Gospel of John?

More online at:
www.theologicalstraydogs.com

