

Why Is There a Huge Gap Between Easter and Passover This Year?

Usually the Resurrection season and the Passover season overlap. However, every few years we encounter an inconsistency in the calendar when believers will celebrate the Lord's resurrection at Easter a full month before the biblical observance of the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection at Passover.

When this happens, it may appear to confused bystanders that Messiah was resurrected a month before He was put to death as the Lamb of God. This is bewildering indeed! This is one of those years, as Easter Sunday was observed March 27, but Passover will not begin until the evening of April 22. Why such a time difference between the two?

From Israel's exodus from Egypt until today, Passover has always been observed beginning on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew lunar calendar, Nisan, or Aviv (Ex. 12). This was the very day Yeshua was crucified, confirming His identity as the true "Lamb of God" (Luke 22:7; John 1:29, 19:14). Three days later, Yeshua rose again on the biblical Feast of Firstfruits, becoming our "first fruits from among the dead" (Lev. 23:10-14; 1 Cor. 15:20).

From the time of Yeshua's death and resurrection until the third century A.D., believers in Yeshua tied the Lord's resurrection to the celebration of Passover. However, as various bishops took the place once held by the apostles, decisions were made in order to separate the faith from its Jewish roots. It was from this turn of events that the Resurrection came to be celebrated apart from the Passover.

At the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., the final decree was made

that Easter be observed on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring, and not in conjunction with Passover. After this Council, Emperor Constantine sent out a letter to all those who were not able to be present informing them of the decisions made, including the decision to reject Passover and to instead celebrate Easter:

“It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom [the calculation] of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In rejecting their custom, we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Easter. ... We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Savior has shown us another way.... we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews.” (From “Letter of the Emperor to all those not present at the Council: Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib. iii., 18-20. [Click here for the source.](#))

From this, what was intended to be a victory for the church has instead brought confusion at best and serious damage at worst. The repercussions of these weighty decisions continue to this day. Sadly, when Yeshua’s death and resurrection is celebrated apart from its Jewish context of Passover, most Jewish people do not recognize Yeshua as their Messiah.

Also, as the church has moved away from the Jewish roots of their faith, it has robbed Gentile believers of the “rich root of the olive tree” into which they have been grafted (Rom. 11:17)! As a result, many Gentile believers do not have a context in which to live out their calling to “make Israel jealous” for their own Messiah.

What can be done about this weighty turn of events?

Today, more and more believers in Yeshua are beginning to reclaim their “stolen goods,” rediscovering their rich

heritage and scriptural connection to their Jewish roots as they study the Word of God. Many are hosting “Messiah in the Passover” banquets and presentations at their churches, and inviting Jewish unbelievers around them to take part!

And, when the world gives you lemons, make lemonade. On years such as this, we have the months of both March and April to proclaim as John once did, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). {eoa}

Dr. Sam Nadler is a Jewish believer in Jesus who has been in Messianic Jewish ministry for over 40 years. Sam is the president of Word of Messiah Ministries, which is bringing the Good News to the Jew first but not to the Jew only, and planting Messianic Congregations in Jewish communities worldwide. To encourage and equip the Body of Messiah in our shared calling, Sam is invited to speak in churches across the country, and has written multiple books on Jewish evangelism, discipleship, and the Feasts of Israel. For more information and resources, or to invite Sam to speak at your church, visit: .