THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVER

What Does It Mean?
When Should It Be Observed—
the 14th or the 15th?

By
Fred R. Coulter

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Prologue

The contentious controversy over a 14th or 15th Passover is an ancient conflict spanning over 3,000 years. This conflict can be traced to Israel's early years in the Promised Land, when the idolatrous worship of Baal began to take hold. Baal, the false "Lord" of the heathen, was the chief rival of the true Lord God of Israel. The worshipers of Baal continually enticed and seduced the people of Israel to replace the worship of the true God with the counterfeit practices of Baalism.

After the twelve tribes of Israel split into the northern kingdom, called the Kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom, called the Kingdom of Judah, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom rejected the worship of the Lord God and embraced Baalism as their official religion. So universal was this descent into Baalism that in the 900's B.C., about seventy years after the division of the kingdom, Ahab, who ruled the northern kingdom of Israel, took Jezebel as his wife. Jezebel, who was the high priestess of Asherah and Baal, used her royal authority to promote her pagan religion and suppress the worship of the true Lord God of Israel.

Under the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel, Israel further abandoned her covenant with the Lord God and covenanted with the false impostor Baal. Forsaking the Nisan 14 Passover and the Nisan 15-21 Feast of Unleavened Bread, which the true Lord had commanded, Israel embraced Baal's counterfeit Nisan 15 transubstantiation meal and a Nisan 15-21 leavened bread observance.

Israel's infidelity so angered the Lord God that He shut up the heavens. He sent Elijah the prophet, who prayed that the latter rains of the spring would cease. The rains failed for three successive years. During three Passover/Unleavened Bread seasons, the skies were like iron and the fields were like brass. For three long years, the children of Israel and their pagan priests cried out to Baal, the rain-god, "El is Baal, El is Baal, El is Baal." Still the rains did not come. The priests and prophets of Baal leapt and shouted, slashing themselves until their blood gushed onto "Mother Earth." The offering of their blood was meant to provoke Baal, "Father Sky," to anger. They believed that Baal would then strike out at the drought and angrily thunder across the sky in tumultuous, raining fury. But the rains never came.

At the end of three and one-half years, in the fall, perhaps near the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, Elijah called the children of Israel and the priests and prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel. He challenged them to return to the worship of the true Lord God. Elijah's challenge rang out across the slopes of Mount Carmel: " 'How long will you vacillate between two different opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, *then* follow him.' And the people did not answer him a word" (I Kings 18:21).

Elijah called upon the children of Israel to repent and return to God's true covenant with all their hearts. This repentance meant returning to the

true worship of God, including the Nisan 14 Passover, the weekly Sabbath and the annual holy days of God. Israel was called to repent of honoring Baal on Nisan 15 with an animal sacrifice and a meal of transubstantiation. This "passover of Baal" was one of the most sacred days of Baal worship, for it was believed that on the full moon of Nisan 15 the leavened bread and wine offered to Baal actually became the body and blood of Baal. This counterfeit "passover" service was followed by a feast of seven days of leavened bread. It was accompanied by orgiastic, sexual worship of Baal. Elijah was calling Israel to repent and turn from these grievous idolatrous practices.

It was agreed in this confrontation between Elijah and the priests and prophets of Baal that the God who answered by fire would prove Himself to be the true Lord God of Israel. As the priests and prophets of Baal began their ritual dancing and bloodletting, Elijah provoked them with repeated challenges. Elijah's mocking continued through the day while the priests of Baal called fruitlessly upon their god. The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves leaped, shouted and gashed themselves with knives until "Mother Earth" ran thick with their blood. But Baal, "Father Sky," remained silent and windless. The prophets' blood spilling on the barren ground brought no response from Baal.

After the priests of Baal finished their futile, bloody rituals, Elijah acted. "And Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar big enough to contain two measures of seed.

"And he arranged the wood, and cut the bull in pieces, and placed *it* on the wood, and said, 'Fill four water jars with water and pour on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.' And he said, 'Do *it* the second time.' And they did *it* the second time. And he said, 'Do *it* the third time.' And they did *it* the third time. And the water ran all around the altar. And he filled the trench also with water.

"Now it came to pass at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near, and said, 'LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that you *are* God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and that You have turned their heart back again.' Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the burnt sacrifice and the wood, and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench. And when all the people saw, they fell on their faces. And they said, 'The LORD [Jehovah], He *is* the God [Elohim]! The LORD, He *is* the God!' And Elijah said to them, 'Take the prophets of Baal. Do not let one of them escape.' And they took them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and killed them there" (I Kings 18:30-40).

Convinced by this awesome display of power, Israel was ready to turn from Baal worship and to renew her covenant relationship with the true Lord God by worshiping Him on His weekly Sabbath and by observing the 14th Passover, the seven days of unleavened bread and all the holy days of God. But Israel's repentance was short-lived, and the people soon returned to whoring after Baal. When Israel again broke her covenant with God, she was rooted out of the land in accordance with the mutually agreed terms of that covenant. Between 721 and 718 BC, nearly all the Israelites from the ten northern tribes were carried into Assyrian captivity, disappearing into the hot, dusty wastes of what are now the nations of Armenia, Iraq and Iran. The southern kingdom of Judah also refused to repent of her whoring after Baal and, beginning with a series of Chaldean-Babylonian invasions in 609 BC, was carried into captivity.

Baalism was the stumbling block that turned both Israel and Judah from their covenant with God, ultimately bringing their captivity. Central to their worship of Baal was a Nisan 15 transubstantiation meal. To this day, Judah insists on observing the Passover on Nisan 15, clinging to the day that she was accustomed to observe in commemoration of Baal. She refuses to acknowledge Christ Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God, slain on Nisan 14.

Christianity itself has not been immune to the insidious influences of Baalism. Deliberate attempts to pervert the true worship of God through the counterfeit teachings of Baalism are recorded in the writings of the New Testament. The force behind these attempts was the centuries-old assertion that Nisan 14 was not the true Passover day of God. The epistles of Paul are rife with this doctrinal combat (Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews), and the Gospel of John attests to this spiritual and doctrinal combat in which all true Christians were fully engaged by AD 70. By AD 95, the leadership of the Roman church (ekklesia) was abandoning the seventh-day Sabbath for Sunday, the first day of the week, and abandoning the 14th Passover for Easter Sunday worship.

This was the battlefield of doctrine on which the early New Testament church, the new Israel, engaged Baal and his priests (Jude 11, Revelation 2:14). These priests of Baal, called *kohens* or *khns* in the ancient language of the Canaanite, launched a three-pronged assault against the true Christians of the first-century church. One prong of the assault was launched from Jerusalem; a second assault was launched from Alexandria, Egypt; and the third assault was launched from Rome.

These three movements soon coalesced into a weekly communion service—a meal of transubstantiation to Mithras, the Baal of Persia, and the annual sunrise service in honor of Mithras' supposed resurrection. This service, now renamed Christian, was adopted by growing numbers of churches throughout the empire until it eventually replaced the true Passover service of Nisan 14. This push to paganize the worship of God was championed by Orthodox and Gnostic Gentile leaders of Asia Minor and Rome.

By AD 135, nearly every church congregation (*ekklesia*) in the Mediterranean region had abandoned the true Passover for Sunday Communion and the yearly Easter sunrise services. By AD 195, a mere sixty

years later, the Orthodox Gentile bishops of Palestine had fully succumbed to this onslaught. Let us not forget that the first step in this dastardly departure from the true worship of God was the seemingly innocuous introduction of Baal's communion meal of Nisan 15 by the Middle Eastern conspiracy and of Baal's weekly Sunday worship by the leadership of Rome.

By AD 200, the only remaining bastion of truth to be found west of the Great Syrian Desert was in the province of Asia. As the book of Revelation and early church histories record, the true Christians of Asia, led by the Ephesus church (*ekklesia*), manned the ramparts of righteousness as received from the Lord Jesus Christ and the true apostles, and repelled assault after assault against the weekly seventh-day Sabbath and against the 14th Passover.

Eusebius records the testimony of Polycrates, the leader of the Ephesian resistance, who held fast against this invasion of false doctrine: "...but the bishops in Asia were led by Polycrates in persisting that it was necessary to keep the custom which had been handed down to them of old. Polycrates himself in a document which he addressed to Victor and to the church of Rome, expounds the tradition which had come to him as follows: 'Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia great luminaries sleep, and they will rise on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven and seek out [literally to raise up] all the saints. Such were Phillip of the twelve apostles, and two of his daughters who grew old as virgins, who sleep in Hierapolis, and another daughter of his, who lived in the Holy Spirit, rests at Ephesus. Moreover, there is also John, who lay on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the breastplate, and the martyr, and teacher. He sleeps at Ephesus. And there is also Polycarp at Smyrna, both bishop and martyr, who sleeps at Laodicea, and Papirius, too, the blessed, and Melito the eunuch, who lived entirely in the Holy Spirit, who lies in Sardis, waiting for the visitation from heaven when he will rise from the dead. All these kept the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, never swerving, but following according to the rule of the faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen, and some of them have I followed. For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen ever kept the day when the people put away the leaven. Therefore, brethren, I who have lived sixty -five years in the Lord and conversed with the brethren from every country, and have studied all the holy Scriptures, am not afraid of threats, for they have said who were greater than I, "It is better to obey God rather than men" ' " (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I, pp. 505-507).

After the death of Polycrates and his fellow Christian warriors in Asia Minor, the only remaining resistance to the relentless pagan conspiracy was in the distant Mesopotamian Valley and in the mountainous regions of Europe. Our true Christian brethren in these regions faithfully preserved the Old and New Testaments from the ravages of the Roman Orthodox, Jewish Orthodox and Gnostic communities. Opposing all corrupting influences, they preserved the only true testimony of our Messiah and His Passover.

As Elijah confronted the prophets and priests of Baal, and as our New Testament brethren resisted false prophets in their days, we also are engaged in a conflict. At stake is our eternity. Our combat is not against

flesh and blood, but against the diabolical strongholds of reasonings–seductive reasonings that draw us away from the true worship of God and into the counterfeit worship of Baal.

We who are true Christians are the "New Israel." As Baalism was a stumbling block to the Israelites of old, tempting them to forsake their covenant with God, so our covenant relationship with our Lord is being severely tested. Will we falter in that relationship and succumb to the false teachings that our earlier brethren so faithfully resisted? Will we retreat from conflict and betray this ancient cloud of witnesses, whose blood figuratively cries out from the altar of God? Or will we overwhelm the strongholds of evil by continuing to follow our Lord and remaining faithful to the 14th Passover?

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, instituted the new symbols of the Christian Passover on the night of the 14th of Nisan. If we have truly accepted Christ as our Passover sacrifice, we must defend the 14th Passover that He established as the Lord God of the Old Covenant and instituted as the Mediator of the New Covenant. If we desire that God the Father continue to "pass over" our transgressions in grace and forgiveness, we must remain under the blood of the only Passover sacrifice that can cover our sins—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

To attempt to worship God on a Nisan 15 Passover or with communion/Eucharist/Easter celebration is to betray Christ and remove ourselves from His protective blood of the New Covenant. The choice is ours! If Christ be Lord, let us follow Him. For the worshipers of Baal continue their centuries-long assault against God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

In *The Christian Passover*, Fred R. Coulter gives us a sharp doctrinal sword with which to engage and defeat the enemies of Christ. He offers us the strong shield of God's Word to protect ourselves from the darts of Satan as we battle against the strongholds of perverse doctrine. This carefully researched book confronts the 14th-15th Passover controversy with full faith, courage, force, and scholarly honesty to expose the errors of heresy and to reveal the light of the Word of God. Every argument, every doctrinal question and every difficult Scripture has been thoroughly examined, and the truth of the Word of God has been made clear and easy to understand.

The task of defending the truth of God's Word has fallen to us in this end time. Let us therefore be diligent to study every Scripture in this vitally important book. Let us gird up our loins, take up this doctrinal sword and shield, and fight the good fight of faith!

Carl D. Franklin
Winter 1993
Fall 1999

Preface—First Edition

The title of this book may give the impression that the contents are devoted to a very narrow and technical Biblical subject. It is true that this book was written to thoroughly document and confirm the exact date and time of day for the proper observance of the true Christian Passover. However, the full meaning and ramifications of the true New Testament Passover extend far beyond the day and time of its observance. The Christian Passover is the heart and core of Biblical Christianity. It is the bedrock foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Observing the true Christian Passover, as commanded by Jesus Christ, is fundamental to salvation and eternal life.

While all religions—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and others—profess various methods and avenues to eternal life, the Bible teaches that there is only ONE WAY! That way is through Jesus Christ—His life, death and resurrection. On the night of His last Passover, before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus proclaimed, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

THERE IS NO OTHER WAY!

Jesus made it absolutely clear that eternal life comes only through His flesh and His blood: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:53-54).

These words of Jesus Christ have led to the age-long conflict between professing Christianity and the religion of Judaism. With the exception of a number of Jewish Messianic believers, Judaism as a whole has rejected Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of mankind. Hence, Judaism does not recognize the writings and teachings of the New Testament, including the 14th Christian Passover. Judaism claims that according to their traditions, the Passover is on the 15th day of the first month of the Hebrew/Jewish calendar, and always has been, in spite of the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures clearly teach that it was originally observed on the 14th day of the first month.

While blinded to their own error, the leaders of Judaism readily acknowledge that the traditions and customs of worldly Christianity—Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants—did not originate in the teachings of the Scriptures. Nowhere do the Scriptures of the Old Testament—or the New Testament—teach Sunday-keeping, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or other holidays which are supposedly "Christian." Neither do the Scriptures teach that God accepts the worship of idols and icons, or the use of rosaries. In fact, the Scriptures strongly condemn such abominable idolatries! All these pagan religious practices are condemned by God in the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. It is a historical fact that these pagan

religious practices are not of Biblical origin but were adopted into worldly Christianity from Gnostic Gentile religions.

On the other hand, worldly Christianity, as paganized as it is, can clearly understand the error of Judaism in rejecting Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Most professing Christians can also perceive the error in Judaism's justification and salvation by works of law, and that such works are a means of compelling God to grant eternal life to the believer.

Opposition between worldly Christianity and Judaism has raged since the last part of the first century. However, perceiving the errors in the religious practices of another does not automatically bring one to an understanding of the true teachings of the Scriptures, whether Old or New Testaments.

In spite of opposition from the leaders of both worldly Christianity and Judaism, down through the centuries there have always been true Christians who have observed the seventh-day Sabbath and the 14th Christian Passover as taught by Jesus Christ. These true believers have the faith and testimony of Jesus Christ. They have rejected the paganized idolatry, dogmas, traditions, teachings and practices of worldly Christianity. Likewise, they have rejected the anti-Scriptural, traditional practices of Judaism, which oppose the teachings of Jesus Christ.

This body of true Christians has been preserved and nurtured by God through repeated persecutions and martyrdoms at the hands of the worldly religious forces of Catholicism and Judaism. These true believers have survived through all generations since Jesus Christ founded His own Church, and are again emerging as a religious body in sufficient numbers to cause notice. But in these end times, the opposing forces of worldly Christianity and Judaism have renewed their assault against the true faith in their attempts to paganize or Judaize the true Church of God away from the true teachings of the Scriptures. The true Church of God, now numbering hundreds of organizations and thousands of congregations around the world, is engaged in a doctrinal battle for the truth of the Scriptures and the true worship of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

It is not difficult to expose the pagan doctrines of worldly Christianity. The truth of God in both Old Testament and New Testament clearly reveals the non-Biblical and non-Christian aspects of those teachings. However, the anti-Scriptural teachings of Judaism are more difficult to expose. These traditional teachings are Judaism's chief weapon in an insidious effort to Judaize all forms of Christianity—whether worldly or Biblical.

While this dual conflict is new for true Christians in this age, it is the same conflict which confronted the original apostles and followers of Jesus Christ in the first century when the true Church of God was being raised up. The beginnings of the Judaic/Christian conflict are recorded for us in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Evidence of this conflict can be found in all the books of the New Testament.

Likewise the conflict between true Christianity and the forces of paganism can also be found in the pages of the New Testament. The undermining influence of Gnostic and Orthodox Christianity was responsible for many warnings and much condemnation in I and II Corinthians; Colossians; II Peter; I, II, III John and Jude.

In the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, we find a prophecy of both conflicts as they would impact the true Church of God down through history until the return of Jesus Christ. There are some in the churches of God who have succumbed to these pressures. But in spite of all opposition, there are many faithful Christians who have continued to believe and practice the truth.

God has faithfully preserved His Word of truth so that the true way of salvation through Jesus Christ is available for all to know. In the final analysis, it is not the religious traditions of men—neither worldly Christianity nor Judaism—which should form the basis of our beliefs. The faith of a true Christian should be founded solely upon the inspired Word of God.

The purpose of this book is to help the reader to understand the truth of God as preserved in the Scriptures of both Old Testament and New Testament concerning the Christian Passover. It is vital for every true believer to understand this truth. Observing the true Passover as Jesus commanded and partaking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ is essential to enter the New Covenant, and to reaffirm and maintain that covenant relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

On the night of His last Passover, Jesus instituted the New Covenant, beginning with the footwashing, and then administering to His disciples the new symbols of the unleavened bread and the wine. In commanding them to practice the New Covenant Passover, He taught them an integral part of its meaning: "In that day [the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead], you shall know that I am in My Father, and you *are* in Me, and I am in you. The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him....If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

"The one who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me" (John 14:20-24).

These words of Jesus Christ clearly express another Biblical truth: "For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life **through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom. 6:23).

May God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son grant you the love and conviction of the Truth of God, so that through the love and grace of God and the proper observance of the true Christian Passover, as Jesus commanded, you may obtain the gift of eternal life which is granted only through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior—THE TRUE PASSOVER LAMB OF GOD!

Fred R. Coulter
Winter 1993

Preface—Second Edition

When the first edition of *The Christian Passover* was released, one prominent evangelist asked, "Why does something as simple as the Passover need a book of 320 pages to explain it?" Yes, why are the controversies over the Christian Passover so complicated that now an even larger book of 512 pages is required to thoroughly explain it? The answer is that the clear and simple instructions of Jesus Christ have been buried under an avalanche of false doctrines, misinterpretations, and Christianized pagan practices that have become time-honored traditions. These blatant false teachings and practices have nearly destroyed the true knowledge of the Christian Passover, which reveals the supreme love of God the Father in giving His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The truth is that the Christian Passover encompasses the entire message of God as revealed in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. It reveals the greatness of God in fulfilling the promise of a Savior Who would redeem mankind from sin. This promise, which was given after man's first sin, was fulfilled when the Creator God gave up His glory and honor and came to earth in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16). The apostle Paul reveals how God humbled Himself to become a man: "Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus; Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant; and being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). In His great love, the Creator of mankind became "the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Long before the birth of Jesus Christ, Satan the devil had prepared his grand deception, which offered an appealing array of counterfeit doctrines and practices to turn mankind from the true way of salvation. When Jesus began His ministry, He condemned the leaders of Judaism for rejecting the commandments of God and adopting worthless substitutes, which became the official traditions of the Jews: "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men.' For leaving the commandments of God, you hold fast the traditions of men.... 'Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your *own* tradition' " (Mark 7:6-9).

The Scriptural and historical evidence that is presented in this book clearly points to the traditional practices of Judaism as the cause of the confusion over which day is the true Passover day—the 14th or the 15th. By setting aside the misinterpretations and traditions of Judaism and systematically examining the Scriptures of the Old Testament, it is possible to determine the exact time that God ordained for the observance of the Passover. The true Passover day is not the day that is recognized by the leaders of Judaism.

In New Testament times, many Christians succumbed to the false teachings and practices of Judaism. Over the centuries, many more Christians fell prey to counterfeit practices which began in ancient Babylon. These perverse practices were brought into Christianity through the influence of the Roman church.

Today we are confronted with a fully developed apostate Christianity, which a deceived world has accepted as authentic. The apostle Paul called this satanic deception, which began to unfold in his day, "the mystery of iniquity is already working" (II Thess. 2:7). In an epistle to the Corinthians, he warned of false apostles who claimed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ but were actually the ministers of Satan the devil: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something* good....For such *are* false apostles—deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15).

The apostle Peter also warned that false apostles would secretly come into the churches of God and corrupt the true teachings of Jesus Christ: "But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, **who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies, personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the truth will be blasphemed**" (II Pet. 2:1-2).

As the apostasy was gaining ground, the apostle Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote an urgent appeal to the early Christians, exhorting them to hold fast to the faith of Jesus Christ, which had been delivered to them by His true apostles. Notice: "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting *you* to fervently fight for the faith which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints. For certain men have stealthily crept in, those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness, and are personally denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4).

Jude's fervent appeal did not turn back the rising tide of apostasy. The satanically inspired movement was so powerful that the true apostles of Jesus Christ were being rejected by some in the churches that they had raised up (II Cor. 10:10-12, III John 9). The true faith ceased to be taught and practiced in these Christian-professing churches. A few decades after the death of the apostles, those Christians who continued in the true teachings of Jesus Christ were cast out of the churches. In its place an entirely different brand of

Christianity arose. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut writes: "We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A. D., 'The Age of Shadows,' partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least. We have no longer the clear light of the Book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. **For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A. D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul**" (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 41).

One major difference was that the Christian Passover was no longer being observed as an annual remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ. The apostate churches had replaced the Christian Passover with the weekly observance of the so-called "Lord's Supper." Hurlbut writes, "The Lord's Supper was universally observed. This began as a service in the home, like the Jewish Passover, out of which it was an outgrowth" (Ibid., p. 45).

The subversion of the Christian Passover observance was a major step in Satan's plan to seduce believers into leaving the true faith. This subversion was already underway in the days of the apostles. In I Corinthians 11, Paul strongly condemned the practice of eating a meal with the Passover and calling it "the Lord's Supper." As Hurlbut shows, this counterfeit observance became the practice of Christians everywhere: "But among Gentile churches the custom arose of celebrating it [the improper observance of the Passover] at a meeting of the church, as a supper to which each member brought some share of the provision. St. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for abuses that had crept into this method of observance. By the end of the century the Lord's Supper was everywhere a service held at the meeting-place of the Christians, but (probably on account of the persecutions) not in public. All except members of the church were excluded from this celebration, which was held as a 'mystery' " (Ibid., p. 45).

The "mystery of lawlessness" that had begun to work in the days of the apostle Paul had fully engulfed the churches, leading the majority of the early believers to reject the observance of the true Christian Passover on the 14th day of the first month, as taught by Jesus Christ and the apostles, and to adopt the weekly observance of "the Lord's Supper." This initial change led to further changes, and the observance of the Lord's Supper was soon replaced by the leaders of the Roman church with the sacrifice of the Mass. This practice, which originated in ancient paganism, is observed by millions of professing Christians in all parts of the world today.

In his book *The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop describes the insidious manner in which the pagan practices and teachings of ancient Babylon were brought into the early Church: "But at its first introduction into the Church, it came in secretly and by stealth, with 'ALL DECEIVABLENESS of unrighteousness.' It wrought 'mysteriously' under fair [sounding] but

false pretenses, leading men away from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. And it did so secretly, for the very same reason that idolatry was secretly introduced in the ancient Mysteries of Babylon; it was not safe, it was not prudent to do otherwise. The zeal of the true Church, though destitute of civil power, would have aroused itself, to put the false system and all its abettors beyond the pale of Christianity, if it had appeared openly and all at once in all its grossness; and this would have arrested its progress. Therefore it was brought in secretly, and by little and little, one corruption being introduced after another, as apostasy proceeded, and the backsliding Church became prepared to tolerate it, till it has reached the gigantic height we now see, when in almost every particular the system of the Papacy is the very antipodes of the system of the primitive Church" (page 8).

As Satan had inspired the leaders of Judaism to replace the Word of God with their own traditions, so he inspired the apostate Christian church to substitute human traditions and the teachings of the "early church fathers" for the teachings of Jesus Christ. In a section titled the "Sacrifice of the Mass" (pages 158-165), Hislop traces this religious practice to the idolatrous sun-worship of ancient Egypt. The practice that the Roman Catholic Church calls "Communion" or the "Holy Eucharist" originated in the corrupt, ungodly worship of the Egyptian sun-god, and not in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Rather than leading people to Christ, such apostate practices lead people into perdition.

At the close of the apostolic age, God gave the apostle John a vision of the fully developed apostate church, which practices the "mystery of iniquity." In the book of Revelation, this counterfeit religious system is identified as "Babylon the Great." It is a universal church with great power and world dominance: "And one of the seven angels who had the seven vials came and spoke with me, saying to me, 'Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great whore who sits upon many waters [the waters represent many peoples and nations and languages (verse 15)]; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.' Then he carried me away in *the* spirit to a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, full of names of blasphemy. And the woman *was* clothed in purple and scarlet, and *was* adorned with gold and pearls and precious stones; *and* she had a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominations and *the* filthiness of her fornication; and across her forehead a name *was* written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And after seeing her, I wondered with great amazement" (Rev. 17:1-6).

The "mystery of lawlessness" will reach the pinnacle of power when Babylon the Great has succeeded in amalgamating all religions under her control. When that is achieved, believers who practice the true faith of Jesus Christ—observing the Christian Passover as He commanded, and keeping the seventh-day weekly Sabbath and the Biblical holy days—will be persecuted and killed.

The words of the apostle Paul show that the "mystery of lawlessness" will continue to grow until the return of Jesus Christ: "For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only *there is* one Who is restraining at the present *time* until it arises out of *the* midst. And then the lawless one will be revealed (whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and will destroy with the brightness of His coming); *even* the one whose coming is according to *the* inner working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those who are perishing because they did not receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved. And for this cause, God will send upon them a powerful deception that will cause them to believe *the* lie, so that all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but who took pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:7-12).

As the return of Jesus Christ draws near, Satan the devil is employing all the powers and forces of evil to complete his deception of the entire world (Rev. 12:9). One of his greatest deceptions is the perversion and paganization of the Christian Passover. He has so subtly masterminded his false doctrines and practices that they are nearly universally accepted and believed. People through the centuries have become so used to hearing, believing and practicing satanic lies that they cannot believe the truth. To those who have been blinded by Satan's deceptions, the true observance of the Christian Passover seems fanatical and cultish. As Dressdon James once wrote, "When a well-packaged web of lies has been sold gradually to the masses over generations, the truth will seem utterly preposterous and its speaker [or writer] a raving lunatic."

Satan has done his job well. He has deceived the professing Christian world with a multitude of false doctrines and practices. He has replaced the true Passover of Jesus Christ with the sacrifice of the Mass and the Lord's Supper. The deception is so pervasive that religious teachers in the Christian churches will not accept the truth of the Bible. The author has personally experienced this close-minded response from a prominent scholar who was taught by Jesuits at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He was a well-known teacher and writer for the Seventh-Day Adventists at Andrews University in Michigan, and died in 2009. When he was presented with the first edition of *The Christian Passover*, he perused it until he came to a section which exposed the Eucharist as a false practice. Then he immediately threw the book into the trash, because it was the opposite of what he had been taught. It is shameful that a scholar and teacher who claims to be a seeker of truth would close his eyes to the Scriptural and historical facts.

Too many are so deeply entrenched in the traditions and teachings of men that they refuse to accept the truth of God. The truth of God's Word cuts like a two-edged sword, refuting the false doctrines and practices of apostate Christianity. Because the scope of the deception is so great, and the misinterpretation of Scripture so extensive, it is necessary to address every false argument concerning the Passover and examine each one in the light of God's Word. Then the glorious truth of the Christian Passover will open the door to the true gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why this book was written.

THIS EDITION IS COMPLETELY REVISED

The second edition of *The Christian Passover* is virtually a new book, having been extensively rewritten and edited. Few pages remain as they were in the first edition. In addition, this second edition contains five new chapters. One chapter explains why the Jews in exile do not keep a 14th Passover. Three chapters explain the significance of the covenant that God made with Abraham on the night of the 14th day of the first month—the day that became the Passover day. Since the first edition was published, much has been learned about covenantal law, which is the basis of God's covenant with Abraham, the Old Covenant with Israel and the New Covenant with the Church. The covenant oath that God made to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 15, was a foretype of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, which established the New Covenant. The fifth chapter that was added shows the prophecies from the Old Testament that were fulfilled by the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.

Since the first edition of *The Christian Passover* was published in 1993, the author has finished translating the New Testament. In this second edition, all Scriptural references from the New Testament use the author's translation, *The New Testament In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version With Commentary*. For Old Testament references, many critical Scriptures have been quoted from The Schocken Bible, as translated by Everett Fox.

Other additions and changes include a complete index of Scriptural references, an expanded glossary and bibliography, and an updated and expanded index. Nearly fifty pages of exegetical appendices have been added to deal with the technical aspects of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and difficult-to-understand Scriptures. All these additions have expanded the first edition by over fifty percent, resulting in a second edition of 512 pages.

Every page in this book is dedicated to teaching the true Scriptural observance of the Christian Passover. This ceremony, which Jesus Christ instituted for every believer who enters the New Covenant, is to be observed on the night of the 14th day of the first month—"the night in which He was betrayed." Jesus Christ commands each true believer to participate in the three ordinances of the Christian Passover: 1) the footwashing; 2) eating the unleavened bread, which symbolizes the broken body of Jesus Christ; and 3) partaking of the wine, which symbolizes Jesus Christ's own shed blood for the forgiveness of sin. When observed in the manner that Jesus taught, the Christian Passover truly expresses "*the* simplicity that *is* in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3).

May God the Father and Jesus Christ grant you an open mind and the ability to understand the full meaning of the true Christian Passover. May God give you the faith and courage to love the truth of God and cast aside the deceptive teachings and practices of apostate Christianity, which lead to death. The gift of eternal life comes only through partaking of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ as the true Passover Lamb of God. Jesus said, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh,

which I will give for the life of the world....Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day; for My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so also the one who eats Me shall live by Me" (John 6:51-57).

May God impart His own love to you, inspiring you to love Him and Jesus Christ with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength, so that you may receive eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ.

Fred R. Coulter
Fall 1999

Acknowledgments

Initial credit and acknowledgment for this book belong to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Their inspiration and understanding imparted throughout the compilation of this work have been continually evident. It is my sincere hope that this same inspiration and understanding may be imparted to you, the reader.

Appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to my lovely, dear wife, Dolores, who has cooperated so wonderfully and encouragingly in sacrificing her time away from me during the writing of this book. Personal thanks to Bobby Whitt for initiating the writing of this work, by his phone call to me with questions concerning the Passover, which motivated me to write this book. Thanks go to Carl and Jean Franklin for their dedicated help for the second edition.

For the third edition, nearly all the Old Testament scriptures have been updated using the translation from the *Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version, 2009.* Thanks go to Philip Neal for editing and proofing, Albert and Mela Cataga for proofing, John, Hiedi and Sasha Vogele for updating the scriptures, proofing and formatting for printing.

Special thanks are extended to the members of the Christian Biblical Church of God for their love, prayers, encouragement and support in making this vital book possible. Finally, appreciation and thanks are extended to those faithful Bible scholars and writers who, in their search for truth down through the centuries, have endeavored to uphold the Word of God.

Fred R. Coulter
First Edition, Winter 1993
Second Edition, Fall 1999
Third Edition, Summer 2010

About This Book

This book is the result and accumulation of studies done by the author over the past forty-five years. As a minister of the gospel for over forty years, the author can attest that questions concerning the Christian Passover have repeatedly troubled the minds of many who desire to follow the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Much of this uncertainty is due to conflicting opinions about the date on which the Christian Passover should be observed, the 14th or the 15th. There is also a great variance of opinion concerning the true meaning of the Christian Passover and the significance of observing it. This book answers those questions by presenting the pertinent Biblical teachings with a proper understanding. This book is unique because it is the first book ever written and published that thoroughly explains all aspects of the Passover as recorded in the Bible.

This book makes full use of sound Biblical scholarship and exegetical analysis to help the reader come to the knowledge of the truth of the Bible concerning the meaning and the proper observance of the Christian Passover. But this book was not written in erudite, sophisticated language for a few "experts in the field." Such an esoterical type of presentation has been purposely avoided. The author's approach has been to present the Scriptural facts in a clear and understandable manner for all who are seeking the truth.

The Bible was not written only for intellectuals and so-called scholars to understand and interpret. Its words were inspired by God through the power of the Holy Spirit to instruct and enlighten every seeker of truth. As the apostle Paul wrote Timothy: "All Scripture *is* God-breathed and *is* profitable for doctrine [teaching], for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16*)*. God's Word was given to inspire faith and belief in Christ Jesus and to instruct all true believers in righteousness. It is the powerful, living sword of truth. It is called "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

Seeking to draw from the Word of God the meaning that God Himself intended, the author has included in-depth word studies and the exposition of doctrinal truths and errors. In these expositions, basic truths of God's Word have been presented to convict and admonish, in the hope that the reader may be encouraged to grow in faith and belief in God the Father and Jesus Christ.

For the study of New Testament passages, the author has chosen to use his own translation of the Greek text. This translation was recently completed after twenty-four years of continuous study of New Testament Greek. The author has been a student of New Testament Greek since 1974. His original tutelage was under Dr. Charles V. Dorothy, PhD, of Ambassador College, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Claremont Graduate School. Although he was the author's mentor in New Testament Greek for many years, the author's translation of the New Testament is solely the responsibility of the author. The author has endeavored to translate the New Testament Greek as accurately as possible in order to bring out the rich teachings that

God has inspired for us. The author's translation is based on the Greek text of Stephens, 1550. This is the same Greek text that was used for the translation of the King James Version in 1611.

While the author's knowledge of Hebrew is not as extensive as his knowledge of New Testament Greek, it is sufficient for the doctrinal and exegetical studies presented in this book. In addition, since the publication of the second edition in 1999, the author has closely collaborated with Old Testament Hebrew Consultant, E. Michael Heiss to complete a translation of the Old Testament based on the Ben Asher Masoretic Hebrew Text. Together they have copiously combed through each and every word and phrase, producing a version that is faithful to the original Masoretic texts, while retaining much of the grace of the *King James Version*. In this third edition of *The Christian Passover*, nearly all Old Testament scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version*. Moreover, beginning with the second edition of this book, the author has elected to use *The Holy Scriptures* (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917 and 1955) and *The Schocken Bible* (1995) for selected Old Testament passages.

This book offers the reader a systematic, step-by-step approach to the study of the Passover. Starting with easy-to-understand Scriptures and word studies as a foundation, it progresses, chapter by chapter, to more difficult Scriptures, so that every aspect of the Passover is made easy for the reader to understand.

The Bible instructs us to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). It is for this fundamental purpose that this book was written. It is dedicated to the glory of Jesus Christ, our Living Savior, and God the Father, Who is over all and above all.

Other Works by Fred R. Coulter

The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version With Commentary is a *new* translation that reflects the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek with fidelity and accuracy—and is the *only* English version in which the books of the Bible are arranged in their *original* order. The easy-to-read translation retains the grace and grandeur of the *King James Version* while clarifying many of its problematic passages. Included are commentaries on the writing, canonization and preservation of the Scriptures. Various appendices cover numerous controversial biblical teachings, and detailed footnotes and marginal references explain hard-to-understand passages. A vital tool for all students of the Bible!

The New Testament In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version With Commentary is Coulter's original translation of the New Testament from *Koiné* Greek. At 928 pages, the work includes numerous detailed commentaries and appendices on a wide variety of biblical subjects.

A Harmony of the Gospels in Modern English brings to life the message and purpose of the true Jesus, portraying His life and ministry in their true historical setting. This easy-to-understand, step-by-step account of the life of Christ is an indispensable study aid for every Bible student.

Occult Holidays or God's Holy Days—Which? For centuries leaders of Orthodox Christendom have sold to the masses—Halloween, Christmas, New Years, Easter, etc.—as though they had "Christian" meaning. This book effectively emphasizes that these celebrated holidays are not of God but originate in ancient pagan, heathen religions rooted in satanic occultism, witchcraft, the feminine divine and "New Age" spirituality. Contrary to the fiction of men the true biblical holy days and feasts of God have spiritual meaning and portray God's fantastic plan of salvation for all mankind—past, present and future—as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

The Day Jesus the Christ Died—the Biblical Truth about His Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection is THE ONLY BOOK to present "the rest of the story"—left out by Mel Gibson in his epic movie *The Passion of the Christ*. Without the true historical and biblical facts, one cannot fully understand the meaning of Jesus Christ's horrific, humiliating and gruesome death by beating, scourging and crucifixion. The author presents the full biblical account in a most compelling way. As you will see, the truth is more astounding than all of the ideas, superstitions and traditions of men!

The Seven General Epistles is designed for an in-depth verse-by-verse study of the epistles of James; I and II Peter; I, II and III John and Jude. As part of the living Word of God, these epistles are as meaningful today for personal Christian growth as when they were written.

Lord, What Should I Do? is a book for Christians who are confused by the escalating spiritual and doctrinal chaos in churches today—which is undermining the true faith of the Bible. Any religious organization that teaches the Word of God is a target for the forces of evil behind this chaos. This book clarifies the problem and offers the solution.

On-Line Studies for the serious Bible student—with additional written material and in-depth Bible studies in audio format—can be obtained at **www.cbcg.org**, **www.biblicaltruthministries.org** and **www.churchathome.org**.

Introduction

From the days of Abraham, God has chosen to establish His covenants on the day that He ordained for the Passover to be observed. In Genesis 15, we find the account of God's covenant with Abraham. This special covenant became the foundation for both the Old Covenant with the physical nation of Israel and the New Covenant with spiritual Israel—the Church.

The Scriptural record reveals that God's covenant with Abraham was instituted on the 14th day of the first month. When God began to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt four hundred and thirty years later, this same day became the Passover day. In fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, God initiated His covenant with Israel on the 14th day of the first month. Likewise, the Gospel accounts reveal that Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant for Christians on the Passover night, the 14th day of the first month, with the introduction of new symbols for the commemoration of the sacrifice of Himself as the true Passover Lamb. He is called "...**the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29). The apostle Paul proclaimed, "**For CHRIST OUR PASSOVER WAS SACRIFICED FOR US**" (I Cor. 5:7).

Christians are commanded by their Lord and Savior to commemorate His sacrifice by observing the New Testament Passover each year with the new symbols. But Christians who desire to obey Christ's command are faced with conflicting arguments about how and when the New Testament ceremony should be observed. So persuasive are these arguments that many Christians have begun to observe the Passover on the 15th day of the first month. This practice is the result of blending the Scriptural commands with the traditional observance of the Jews, which differs from the ordinances that are recorded in the Old Testament. These ordinances clearly show that God commanded the Passover to be observed on the 14th day of the first month. However, later Jewish practices, introduced before the 70-year Babylonian captivity in 585 BC and subsequently instituted after the exiles returned to Jerusalem, led to the observance of a 15th Passover. Today, the traditional Jewish practice is to celebrate the Passover entirely on the 15th day of the first month, which is actually the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Until the destruction of the temple in AD 70, some non-Christian Jews killed the Passover lambs at home at the beginning of the 14th, after sunset of the 13th but before dark of the 14th. This domestic Passover, as we will see, conformed to the commands of God. Later temple practice, which became the accepted Jewish tradition, was observed in addition to the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lamb. Those Jews who participated in the temple sacrifice of the Passover killed the lambs late in the afternoon of the 14th, between the hours of 3 PM and 5 PM, and ate the lambs after sunset of the 14th, as the night of the 15th was beginning. This difference in the time of sacrificing the Passover lambs is the origin of the controversy that is generally referred to as the 14th/15th Passover question. (The Bible reckons days from sunset to sunset, not from midnight to midnight, as does the Roman calendar.)

Introduction

With the destruction of the temple in AD 70, all sacrificing of Passover lambs ceased by the non-Christian Jews. The subsequent exile of the Jews into all nations led to the permanent observance of the 15th Passover. Notice this admission by Samuel Al-Aagribi in AD 1484: "Today, however, by reason of our many sins, we are scattered over the four corners of the earth, we are dispersed in the lands of the Gentiles, we are soiled with their ritual uncleanness and unable to reach the House of the Lord, and our status is equivalent to that of persons ritually unclean or traveling far away. That is why **this ordinance of the Passover sacrifice no longer applies to us**, and the reason for this is our father's exceeding disobedience to God and our own following in their sinful footsteps" (Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, p. 206, emphasis added).

Today, the Jews no longer recognize the 14th as the Passover day, with, perhaps, the exception that the firstborn of a family may fast in remembrance of the sparing of the firstborn of Israel in Egypt. The Jews have for centuries observed their Passover on the 15th. The effect of this one-day -late observance is this: The Jews have wholly lost sight of the true meaning of the Passover, which God originally gave the twelve tribes of Israel, of which the true Jews are descendants of only one tribe. The calculated Hebrew calendar* that the Jews use today specifically designates the Jewish Passover as the 15th day of the first month. Moreover, their calendar labels the entire seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread as Passover.**

As a result, Christians who observe the New Testament Passover have been confronted with the problem as to which day is correct, the 14th or the 15th. Some groups claim that it is the 14th, and offer many Scriptures to support their belief. Other groups, with equal conviction, point to Scriptures which appear to show that the Passover should be observed on the 15th, as do the Jews. That is the dilemma!

**The first month of the calculated Hebrew calendar does not coincide with the first month of the Roman calendar in use today. Compared to the Roman calendar, the first month of the calculated Hebrew calendar falls in the spring of the year between the last ten days of March and about the middle of April. The variation is due to the fact that the months of the Hebrew calendar are based on the lunar cycle, and the months of the Roman calendar are based on the solar cycle. Each year the calculated Hebrew calendar must be consulted to determine where the 14th day of the first month falls on the Roman calendar, since it may occur during March or April.*

***To add to the confusion, today some Jews keep two days for every holy day. This means that some Jews will keep nine days of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Hence, Nisan 14 and 15 are kept for the 15th, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and Nisan 21 and 22 are kept for the 21st, the Last Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, this practice is not for the purpose of keeping a 14th Passover, as specifically commanded in the Bible. Rather, it is a two-day traditional observance. This erroneous two-day holy day observance has been extended to all seven holy days, with perhaps the exception of the fast day, the Day of Atonement.*

To compound the problem, to this day the Jews adamantly insist that the Passover was not originally observed on the 14th, but has always been observed on the 15th. Is that what the Bible teaches? Is that what history records? If there was always a monolithic practice of a 15th Passover, why is there a 14th/15th controversy in the first place?

Because of these conflicts and the intertwining of Biblical commands and Jewish tradition, buttressed by Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament designed to justify their traditions, various churches of God are divided as to whether they should keep the New Testament ceremony on the 14th or the 15th. Furthermore, there is confusion about what to call this observance, since true Christians understand that they should keep this New Testament ceremony as commanded by Jesus. Should it be called the Passover—or the Lord's Supper, as do many Protestant denominations?

To complicate matters even more, there is confusion as to what the new symbols should be. Should wine and unleavened bread be used, or should it be plain bread and grape juice? Or should, as a few claim, only bread and water be used? There is also confusion as to what is the real meaning of the symbols. Very few truly understand THE ACTUAL SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF THE TRUE NEW TESTAMENT CEREMONY AS TAUGHT BY JESUS CHRIST AND HIS ORIGINAL PERSONALLY CHOSEN APOSTLES.

What are the Scriptural requirements for keeping the New Testament ceremony? This is a most important question. Its proper observance, at the correct time and in the correct manner as commanded by God, is absolutely essential. For Christians, this question is really a matter of life or death—eternal life or eternal death!

Mainstream Christianity—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and most fundamental churches—long ago rejected Jesus' command to observe the true New Testament ceremony and replaced it with the Christianized pagan festival of Easter. Additionally, many of these churches offer a weekly or daily communion. However, it is not within the scope of this presentation to delve into the paganized traditional practices of those Christian-professing organizations.

This detailed study will deal only with the observance of the Passover as commanded by God and revealed in the Scriptures. It will thoroughly cover the Passover institution in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. We will exhaustively examine every aspect to answer every question concerning the Passover, such as: Which day did God establish for the Passover to be observed? What is the proper time of the day? What constitutes keeping the Passover? When did the Passover in Egypt occur? When did the Exodus take place? Do the traditions of the Jews agree with the Bible? If not, why not? Were the Passover lambs originally slain at the beginning of the 14th, or in the late afternoon toward the end of the 14th? When is evening? When is morning? When is night? What does "between the two evenings" mean—from one evening to the next, after sunset, before sunset, from noon to sunset? When did a 15th Passover begin to be observed? If the Passover date was changed, who changed it and why was it changed? When was

a temple sacrifice of the Passover lamb instituted? Why was it instituted? Who instituted it? Did all Jews universally have their Passover lambs sacrificed at the temple? Was the practice of sacrificing the Passover lambs at the temple a command of God or a tradition of the Jews? Was the domestic Passover sacrifice at various households, as commanded in Exodus 12, rescinded or changed by God's command? On what day did Jesus keep the Passover? Did Jesus and the disciples practice the temple sacrifice of the lamb, or the domestic sacrifice? What is the meaning of the new Passover ceremony that Jesus instituted? What is the spiritual significance of the footwashing? What is the meaning of the broken bread? What is the meaning of the cup of wine? What does it mean to eat the flesh of Jesus Christ and to drink His blood? Why is it so important to observe this New Testament ceremony? When should it be observed? Should Christians follow the traditions of the Jews, or are these traditions contrary to the commands of Jesus Christ?

What changes did Jesus institute in the observance of the Passover? How did both the Passover of the Old Covenant and the Passover of the New Covenant fulfill God's promise to Abraham? How did the covenant sacrifices that God commanded Abraham to offer foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? How did the timing of the death of Jesus Christ fulfill not only the Passover sacrifice, but every type of sacrifice that God commanded in the Old Covenant?

WHAT DO THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES TEACH? WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH? WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PAUL COMMAND?

As you can see from the long list of questions, there is a great deal of confusion about how and when the Passover was kept in both Old Testament and New Testament times. However, we know that "...God is not the author of confusion..." (I Cor. 14:33). We also know that the Word of God reveals His Truth to those He has called and that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, which will lead us into all truth. We need to diligently study the Bible to be sure that we are "...rightly dividing the Word of the truth" (II Tim. 2:15). When our study is guided by the Spirit of God and coupled with prayer, while humbly seeking the truth, we can come to a complete and proper understanding of how and when the Christian Passover should be observed. All true Christians should desire to observe it at the proper time and in the proper manner as taught by Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and partake of it with a full understanding of its purpose and meaning.

For the first and second edition, in addition to the *King James Version*, the author had elected to use for passages of the Old Testament from the translation of the Jewish Publication Society of America, the 1955 edition. Subsequent editions of the *JPSA* contain substantial changes that do not accurately reflect the meaning of the Hebrew text. These later English editions differ greatly from the1917 and 1955 editions by adding traditional interpretations of Judaism that do not follow the rules of the Masoretic text. The 1985 *JPSA* edition, TANAKH—*The Holy Scriptures*, contains major changes and additions, which renders it untrustworthy for this in-depth study of the Passover.

For the study of a number of critical passages in the first five books of the Old Testament—known as the Pentateuch—the author has selected an additional translation which uses precise and literal wording to convey the exact meaning of the Hebrew text. This translation *The Schocken Bible, Volume I—THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES*, as translated by Everett Fox from the Ben Asher Hebrew text. This translation, published by Schocken Books in 1995, adheres to the literal meaning of the Hebrew words that are recorded in the text of the Old Testament. Everett Fox's precise translation of the five books of Moses helps to clarify many hard-to-understand passages.

When the second edition was published in 1999, the author had completed the translation of the New Testament from the *koiné* Greek of the Stephens Text of 1550. It was published in 2004.

In addition, since the publication of the second edition in 1999, the author has closely collaborated with Old Testament Hebrew Consultant, E. Michael Heiss to complete a translation of the Old Testament based on the Ben Asher Masoretic Hebrew Text. Together they have copiously combed through each and every word and phrase, producing a version that is faithful to the original Masoretic texts, while retaining much of the grace of the *King James Version*. In this third edition of *The Christian Passover,* nearly all the Old Testament scriptures are quoted from the new translation found in *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version—with Commentary.*

In the second edition, as well as this third edition, for the study of the New Testament passages which relate to the Passover, the author has elected to use his own translation of the Greek text, the Stephens text of 1550, also known as the Received Text—acknowledged to be the most accurate Greek text. In translating from Greek, the author has taken great care to precisely and accurately convey the inspired meaning of every verse and passage, in order to make the Word of God more meaningful to the reader. The New Testament Greek text is rich and powerful in its inspiration and expression, and grammatically precise in its meaning. The author has endeavored to convey all of these qualities in his translation now incorporated into *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version—with Commentary.*

Since this vital study is dealing with a very complex and controversial subject, it is recommended that the reader begin with the first chapter and read each chapter in sequence—all the way through. It is important to read with an open mind, carefully examining each Scripture as it is presented, and drawing conclusions only after considering all the facts. So many people are adamant in what they believe, with very little regard for the actual facts. In this study, the author has endeavored to define all the facts and discuss all the arguments possible in order to present the Scriptural truth. What is presented in the following pages does not agree with many of the beliefs, doctrines, interpretations or traditions of various religious organizations, synagogues and churches. But the Truth of God stands above everyone and will judge us all!

CHAPTER ONE

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Jesus said that He is the "Beginning and the Ending." The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ is the true Passover Lamb of God for all time by the one perfect sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 7:27; 10:10). Paul declared of Jesus, "For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7). This was the plan of God from the beginning. Jesus was "...the Lamb [of God] slain from *the* foundation of *the* world" (Rev. 13:8). Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ there is no remission of sins, no forgiveness of sins before God the Father. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He is the Beginning!

Jesus Christ is also the Ending. As the Ending, He will complete God's fantastic plan of granting us eternal life: "And He said to me, 'It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one who thirsts, I will give freely of the fountain of the water of life. The one who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son' " (Rev. 21:6-7)

Jesus Christ, Who from the beginning was God and was with God, came to this earth in the flesh to shed His blood as the Passover Lamb of God, in order to deliver us from our sins, and to give us eternal life. When we accept His blood as the sacrifice for our sins and demonstrate our faith in Him by being baptized in His name (Acts 2:38), we are reconciled to God the Father. Our reconciliation with God the Father delivers us from the death penalty for sin and enables us to receive the gift of eternal life.

The gift of eternal life was not offered under the Old Covenant, which held the promise only of physical and material blessings. The New Testament reveals that through the death of Jesus Christ, the Old Covenant has been replaced with the New Covenant—the covenant of grace, which offers eternal life to all who accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. By offering His own body to be slain and His own blood to be shed on the Passover day, Jesus extinguished the Old Covenant and established the New.

At His last Passover meal with the disciples, Jesus instituted the symbols of the New Covenant, which represent His body and His blood: "Jesus took the bread and blessing *it*, *then He* broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; **this is My body**.' And He took the cup; and after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it; **for this is My blood**, the *blood* of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for *the* remission of sins' " (Matt. 26:26-28).

Jesus Christ commanded His followers—all who have repented of their sins and have accepted the blood of His sacrifice for the forgiveness of

their sins—to partake of the symbols of the New Covenant each year as a solemn memorial of His death. Jesus said, "This do in the remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). Every year it is to be a renewal of the New Covenant between the believer, Jesus Christ and God the Father. Partaking of the New Covenant Passover with the new symbols, as Jesus taught, is absolutely essential to remain in the grace of God and to receive the gift of eternal life at the resurrection.

A Matter of Life and Death

The first observance of the Passover by Israel, as recorded in the book of Exodus, was a matter of life or death. If the children of Israel had not carefully followed God's instructions and done exactly as God commanded, when He commanded it to be done, the Lord—Who sent the destroyer to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians—would not have *PASSED OVER* their houses. They would not have been spared from the plague, but would have been slain along with the Egyptians. It was a matter of life and death!

The Old Testament Passover was to be observed yearly by all Israel to reconfirm the Old Covenant. In the broader scope of that covenant, God set before them the same choices of life and good, or death and evil:

"Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments so that you may live and multiply. And the LORD your God shall bless you in the land whither you go to possess it. But if your heart turn away ...and worship other gods and serve them, I denounce to you this day that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days on the land where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, so that both you and your seed may live, that you may love the LORD your God, *and* may obey His voice, and may cleave to Him; for He is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob—to give it to them" (Deut. 30:15-20).

But what about the New Covenant Passover? Why are Christians commanded to partake in this unusual and unique ceremony? Is the New Covenant relationship also a matter of life and death?

In the New Testament, just as in the Old Testament, God has set before us two specific choices: "For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Jesus Christ is "our Passover," slain for us for the remission of our sins. But we must believe God and accept Jesus Christ His Son, by faith, as the Passover sacrifice of God for the forgiveness of our sins, or we cannot receive eternal life.

Without His sacrifice, we will die in our sins—receiving the penalty of eternal death.

Jesus specifically spoke of the sacrifice of Himself as the Passover Lamb of God in this manner: "Truly, truly I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves**" (John 6:53). That is a clear, dogmatic statement. There is no middle ground, no compromise!

When we understand the full meaning of the Christian Passover, we find that this yearly reaffirmation of the New Covenant is at the heart and core of the continuous, ongoing spiritual relationship between the believer and God the Father and Jesus Christ. In partaking of the symbols of Christ's body and blood, the believer is not only reaffirming his or her acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, but is also acknowledging that salvation comes through Christ living within:

"For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. **As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so also the one who eats Me shall live by Me**" (John 6:55-57).

Jesus Christ personally revealed that the observance of the New Covenant Passover is a matter of life or death! He said that those who do not eat His flesh and drink His blood have no life in them—NO ETERNAL LIFE! Eating His flesh and drinking His blood are symbolized by partaking of the bread and the wine of the New Covenant Passover. Jesus also said, when Peter was attempting to reject having Jesus wash his feet, "If I do not wash you, YOU HAVE NO PART WITH ME" (John 13:8).

Jesus made it absolutely clear that footwashing is mandatory for His disciples: "Therefore, if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also are duty-bound to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, *to show* that you also should do exactly as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

How many Christian-professing churches love God the Father and Jesus Christ enough to honor His words by fulfilling the ceremony of footwashing? How many churches of God observe the New Covenant Passover exactly as Jesus Christ commanded, including washing one another's feet, as Jesus did?

The ultimate question we need to ask concerning footwashing is this: Do we want a part with Jesus Christ? If the answer is yes, then we ought to do as Jesus Christ commanded. It is so essential, it is so vital to keep the New Covenant Passover as He commanded—partaking of the bread and the wine, and the ceremony of footwashing—that no one can have eternal life without it! Jesus clearly and absolutely said so!

Jesus Christ—The Only Way to Salvation

Jesus Christ is the ONLY WAY to salvation: "Jesus said to him, '**I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me**' " (John 14:6). The apostles preached the same message, very powerfully and very dogmatically!

After having miraculously healed a man over forty years old who had been born with a deformity, Peter powerfully proclaimed before the religious leaders and rulers of the Jews, "Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **in the name of Jesus Christ** the Nazarean, Whom you crucified, *but* Whom God has raised from *the* dead, by Him this *man* stands before you whole. This is the Stone that was set at naught by you, the builders, which has become the Head of *the* corner.

"And there is no salvation in any other, for neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men, by which we must be saved [Greek *dei*, meaning it is absolutely obligatory]" (Acts 4:10-12).

God the Father has demonstrated His love for mankind by giving His only begotten Son as the true Passover Lamb, so that all who repent may be delivered from eternal death. As the Scripture says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That is how much love God has for the world!

These Scriptures demonstrate the singularly profound importance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as the perfect and complete sacrifice of God the Father for the forgiveness of sins. God the Father has provided the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as full payment for the sins of those whom He calls. Because this loving act of God the Father and Jesus Christ is so profound, those who are called must respond to God's love with their whole being in faith and love. They must completely repent of their sins. Next, they must be baptized in water by complete immersion, symbolizing the death of the old, sinful man by burial in the watery grave. They are thereby co-joined into the death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. When they have fulfilled these conditions, coupled with total commitment and dedication to God, He gives them His Holy Spirit. (Please read and study Acts 2:36-38 and Romans 6:3-6.)

God's Love and Our Love and Obedience

Jesus Christ is the crowning glory of God's plan, expressing God's love for each individual He calls. In the fulfilling of this purpose, God's fantastic love will be made manifest to all mankind, all of humanity—past, present and future. God's plan is revealed in the meaning of His holy days, of which the Passover is the beginning—the first step in God's plan of salvation for mankind.

At His last Passover, Jesus revealed the new spiritual relationship with God the Father that is granted to every believer who responds to His

calling with love, faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Here are Jesus' own words as recorded by the apostle John:

" 'If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age [until Jesus Christ returns]: *even* the Spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be within you....In that day, you shall know that I am in My Father, and you *are* in Me, and I am in you.

" 'The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.' Judas, not Iscariot, said to Him, 'Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?'

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word [His teachings]; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. The one who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word [the entire message] that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me' " (John 14:15-17, 20-24).

This is the heart and core of the love of God toward us and our love in response to God's love. This is the whole meaning of life for a true Christian. **If we love Jesus Christ, we will be keeping His commandments—and those are from God the Father!**

On the other hand, Jesus gave this warning for those who would be claiming His promises and blessings, using His name and claiming to be His followers, but who would not be keeping the commandments of God: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who is doing the will of My Father Who *is* in heaven.

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many mighty works of power through Your name?' And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who are working lawlessness' " (Matt. 7:21-23).

The English word "lawlessness" is translated from the Greek word *anomos*, which means "against law"; that is, against law and commandment keeping. This kind of pseudo-Christianity, which uses Jesus' name and claims authority through His name but refuses to do the will of God, is not accepted by God the Father and Jesus Christ. The end result of this pseudo-Christanity is death—not eternal life. And many, the vast majority of people, are on the broad path of destruction which leads to death, exactly as Jesus said (Matt. 7:13-14).

Those who are practicing this pseudo-Christianity are doing the opposite of what Jesus said those who truly love Him will be doing: "**If you**

love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments" (John 14:15). The one who truly loves God the Father and Jesus Christ will be keeping His commandments—yes, every one of His words—the entirety of His Message.

Here is the first and greatest commandment of all: " 'You shall LOVE *the* Lord your God with ALL YOUR HEART, and with ALL YOUR SOUL, and with ALL YOUR MIND.' This is *the* FIRST and GREATEST commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS" (Matt. 22:37-40). There would be no law, there would be no prophets, there would be no covenants—Abrahamic, Old or New—without these two commandments. EVERYTHING GOD DOES IS BASED ON LOVE!

The apostle John expresses the love of God so clearly in his first epistle: "Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God.

"The one who does not love does not know God, because GOD IS LOVE. In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.

"In this *act* is THE LOVE—not that we loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son *to be the* propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another....And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. GOD IS LOVE, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him" (I John 4:7-11, 16).

This is the attitude of love, faith and obedience that we must have toward God the Father and Jesus Christ in order to understand the Word of God. Without this love for God and His truth, true understanding of the Scriptures can never be achieved!

Spiritual Keys to Understanding the Word of God

There are spiritual keys to understanding Scripture. As we have already learned, we must be continually in a loving, faithful and obedient attitude toward God. This is the foundation of understanding the Word of God.

Another vital principle is clearly taught in Isaiah 28: "Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *Those* who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts [that is, fully grounded in the Word of God], for **precept *must be* upon precept**, precept upon precept; **line upon line**, line upon line; **here a little**, there a little" (verses 9-10).

The Bible tells us that in order to understand doctrine, we must study it line upon line and precept upon precept. That is exactly how we are going

to study the Passover question. The New Testament confirms this approach to understanding the Word of God and establishing sound doctrine. Paul instructed Timothy in how to study and teach doctrine: "Diligently *study* to show yourself approved unto God, a workman [in the Word of God] who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing [precept upon precept, and line upon line] the Word of the truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

The Word of God is called the Word of truth. Furthermore, it is the Spirit of truth which teaches us all things. Jesus said, "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one **will teach you ALL THINGS**, and will bring to your remembrance all things that I have told you" (John 14:26). This is the promise Jesus gave!

The Bible makes it clear that the Word of truth works hand in hand with the Spirit of truth to give understanding to those who love God and seek His will. It is self-evident that it is not possible for the carnal mind, which is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9), to come to the knowledge of the truth of God. In fact, the carnal, unconverted mind is enmity (that is, hostile) toward God and is not willing to be subject to God's laws (Rom. 8:7). Can the Word of truth and the Spirit of truth work hand in hand with the carnal mind of deceit? It is impossible! Regardless of how brilliant or how great the intellect may be, God's Word is understood not in human wisdom and rationale. It is only through the Spirit of God that the Word of God is understood.

Paul taught that it is not through human rationale or intellect that we are able to come to the knowledge of the truth, but by and through the SPIRIT OF GOD: "But according as it has been written, '*The* eye has not seen, nor *the* ear heard, neither have entered into *the* heart of man, *the* things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'

"But God has revealed *them* to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things—even the deep things of God. For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which *is* in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands, except *by* the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God; which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in *words* taught by *the* Holy Spirit *in order to* communicate [comparing] spiritual things by spiritual *means*. But *the* natural man [the carnal mind of man without the Holy Spirit of God] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, indeed he CANNOT understand *them*, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED" (I Cor. 2:9-14).

This is the way God has instructed us to study and understand His Holy Word. Unfortunately, too many people are caught up in the politics of religion, or the organizational power structure of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, or the time-honored doctrines of various churches, or they have submitted to humanly devised church authority, or they have blindly accepted the teachings of so-called biblical scholars, and they are not able to open-mindedly study and completely understand the spiritual truth of God's Word.

In this presentation, you can be fully assured that the Biblically outlined method of study—"rightly dividing" the Word of God—will be used. This study is designed to find the actual truth of the Bible as led by the Holy Spirit of truth. It is not designed to find a religious position that will please a doctrinal board, nor is it designed to uphold a previous doctrinal position, nor to justify a "church doctrine." None of these things really matter, do they? And if they were involved, for whatever reason, do we think that God overlooks such deceptive use of His Word? If we think that we can fool God, we are only deceiving ourselves.

Paul's words to Timothy show the danger in misusing the Scriptures: "See that *they* remain mindful of these things, earnestly charging *them* in the sight of the Lord not to argue over words that are not profitable in any way, *but which lead* to *the* subverting of those who hear" (II Tim. 2:14). This is exactly what has happened with the Passover question. In order to justify doctrinal beliefs that are not taught in the Bible, many writers and preachers have twisted and distorted the Scriptures to fit their own private interpretations. Whole churches have been subverted by arguments and disputes over words which have not been profitable but have been damaging to faith!

The apostle Peter warned the believers to be on guard against false teachers: "As *he has* also in all *his* [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them concerning these things; in which are some things *that are* difficult to understand, which **the ignorant and unstable are twisting *and distorting*, as *they* also *twist and distort* the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction**. Therefore, beloved, since you know this in advance, be on guard against *such practices*, lest you be led astray with the error of the lawless ones, *and* you fall from your own steadfastness" (II Pet. 3:16-17).

Peter understood that those who promote their own private interpretations are rejecting the Holy Spirit of God, which inspired every word that is written in the Scriptures. Notice: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone's own *private* interpretation; because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the* Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20-21).

False doctrines and misinterpretations are continually being spread because ministers and teachers use the Word of God deceitfully. How diabolical it is to take the Word of God, which is the truth, and misapply it to create a lie! Such deceptive use of God's Word has existed from the time of the apostles. In writing to the believers at Corinth, the apostle Paul contrasted his ministry with the deceitful approach of false teachers in his day: "Therefore, having this ministry, according as we have received mercy, we are not fainthearted; for **we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain, not walking in *cunning* craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth we are commending ourselves to every man's conscience before God**" (II Cor. 4:1-2).

Anyone who twists and distorts the Scriptures is "using the law unlawfully," as Paul said, and will end up believing false, satanic doctrines,

which subvert the souls of men. Unfortunately, the landscape of religious history is filled with the bodies of people who have taught false doctrines, and the bodies of people who have embraced such teachings.

Instead of following the broad way of destruction, as so many have, this study will follow all the Biblical and godly rules of Bible study. Please read and be prepared to apply the Fourteen Rules for Bible Study that are listed below before proceeding with this presentation. These rules show the systematic method and mechanics of proper Bible study.

We will not establish doctrine on the traditions of men, regardless of how knowledgeable or authoritative they are reputed to be. Nor will we base doctrine on the commentaries or other writings of men. We will strictly follow the Word of God. We will also examine history concerning the subject, and we will have detailed studies of the original languages, Hebrew and Greek, in order to determine precise definitions and meanings of key, critically important words. Such an approach will enable us to come to a clear understanding of what the Bible is actually teaching and to arrive at a complete understanding of the answers to the Passover questions.

Fourteen Rules for Bible Study

1) Begin with Scriptures that are easy to understand.

2) Let the Bible interpret and prove the Bible. Don't look for what you want to prove; look for what the Bible actually proves.

3) Understand the context—the verses before and after, the chapters before and after. Does your understanding of a particular verse harmonize with the rest of the Bible?

4) Understand the original language, Hebrew or Greek. Never try to establish dogmatic doctrine or teachings by using *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. It can be helpful at times, but it is extremely limited.

5) Ask, what does the Scripture clearly say?

6) Ask, what does the Scripture not say?

7) Ask, who was the book written to?

8) Ask, who wrote it?

9) Ask, who said it?

10) Understand the time frame in history when the book was written.

11) Base your study on Scriptural knowledge that you already understand. What do you know up to this point in time?

12) Do not allow your own personal assumptions or preconceived notions to influence your understanding and conclusions.

13) Do not form conclusions based on partial facts or insufficient information, or the opinions and speculations of others.

14) Opinions, regardless of how strongly you feel about them, don't necessarily count. Scripture must be your standard and guide.

This is the complete study approach. When undertaking a study of the Bible, we should always use this approach, coupled with prayer, trusting God to lead us with His Holy Spirit of truth. We know that He will fulfill His promise to lead us into ALL TRUTH, as we seek the answers to the Passover question—the 14th or the 15th—and the full meaning of the Christian Passover.

Following these rules of Bible study, we will begin in Chapter Two with basic and simple-to-understand Scriptures concerning the meaning of the name "Passover."

CHAPTER TWO

PASSOVER MEANS "*PASSING OVER*"

Some Biblical scholars have cast doubt on the meaning of the name "Passover." The authors of one publication have stated, "One final point, a minor one, concerns the name 'Passover' (Hebrew pesah) itself. It has sometimes been thought that the name came from the 'passing over' of the death angel and that this could mean that the entire festival has to be on the 14th. However, the exact origin of the name is disputed by scholars, and such etymological arguments can never carry a great weight in any discussion" (Dr. Robert L. Kuhn and Dr. Lester L. Grabbe, *The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 14).

That is an unbelievable statement coming from scholars who are supposedly Christian-professing, Bible-believing researchers, and who have undertaken to establish doctrine for a large church of God! But their statement does not mean that we cannot ask and find the answer to the question, what does the word "passover" mean? Why is the Passover called by this name?

Today, most Jews will say that the Passover commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. But is that what the Bible teaches? No, that is not what the Bible teaches!

The Scriptures define the meaning of the word "passover." The Passover is named for an event which was executed by God: "...It *is* the LORD'S Passover, for I will pass through the land of Egypt **this night**, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I *am* the LORD. And the blood shall be a sign to you upon the houses where you *are.* And when I see the blood, **I WILL PASS OVER YOU.** And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you* when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:11-13).

The Passover received its name from the night in which God passed over the houses of the children of Israel and spared their firstborn from the plague of death, while they were still in their houses in the land of Egypt, before the Exodus took place—not while the Exodus was taking place! The Lord **passed over** the houses of the children of Israel and saw the blood of the Passover lambs on the side posts and lintels of their doors, and He did not kill their firstborn.

The Passover derives its name from this event of the Lord's passing over the children of Israel in Egypt, sparing their firstborn from death and redeeming the entire nation from the bondage of slavery. The redemption of God was their only salvation from that bondage of slavery. As the New Testament shows, their slavery was a type of bondage to sin, and the ultimate penalty for sin is death. The Passover has great significance for

Christians in relationship to God's passing over our sins through the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ, and sparing us from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death.

To commemorate His passing over them, God commanded the children of Israel and their descendants to observe the Passover year by year on the day that marked this event: "And you shall observe this thing [the entire Passover ceremony and all that it entails] as a law to you and to your children forever....And it will be, when your children shall say to you, 'What *does* this service *mean* to you?' Then you shall say, '**It *is* the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, [for the reason, because of the fact] Who PASSED OVER** the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt..." (Ex. 12:24-27).

Remember this! The Bible teaches that the Passover ceremony was to commemorate the PASSING OVER of the houses of the children of Israel by the Lord, while they were still in their houses in the land of Egypt. That is why it is called "the Passover." Nothing could be plainer! The Bible nowhere says that the Passover was to commemorate the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follows the Passover, commemorates the Exodus. The Passover is on the 14th day of the first month, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th day of the first month and continues through the 21st day (Lev. 23:5-6).

Flavius Josephus, a noted Jewish historian who was a Pharisee and a general during the Jewish wars, shows in his narration of Exodus 12 that the Jews as late as AD 93-94, when he was recording the customs of the time, still understood that the Passover was named after the event of God's passing over the houses of the children of Israel:

"Whence it is that we do still offer this sacrifice in like manner to this day, and call this festival Pascha, which signifies ***the feast of the passover***, because on that day GOD PASSED US OVER, and sent the plague upon the Egyptians; for the destruction of the first-born came upon the Egyptians that night..." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 2, Ch. 14, Sec. 6, emphasis added).

Nothing could be clearer! Josephus' statements agree completely with the Scriptures and show that Josephus understood why the Passover day is called "the Passover," as did many of the Jews of his day. He also shows that most of the Jews of that time understood that the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates the Exodus. "So the Hebrews went out of Egypt, while the Egyptians wept....Whence it is that in memory of the want we were in, we keep a feast for EIGHT DAYS, which is called ***the feast of unleavened bread***" (Ibid., Ch. 15, Sec. 1, emphasis added).

While Josephus includes the Passover with the Days of Unleavened Bread, his writings show that calling the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread by their correct names, and with understanding as to their

meaning, was still practiced by the Jews during his lifetime. He repeats his explanation of the separate meaning of the two feasts in Book III, Chapter X, Section 5, where he again records that the total number of days observed was eight days—not seven days, as now practiced by the Jews.

It is interesting that when Josephus explains the Scriptural narrations of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, he relates that information correctly. Likewise, he reflects the later traditional practice of calling the entire eight-day celebration "the Passover" when writing about events which occurred from approximately 71 BC to 39 BC. He states, "As this happened [a particular siege] at the time when the feast of unleavened bread was celebrated, which we call **the PASSOVER**..." (Ibid., Bk. 14, Ch. II, Sec. 1, emphasis added).

Josephus' writings verify that the traditional Jewish naming of both feasts as "the Passover" was a later development. God's commands for the two feasts, as found in Exodus 12 and 13, clearly name the Passover as one day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as seven days, making a total of eight days.

We have proven from the Bible and from historical references that there is no question as to why the Passover day is called "the passover." It was named the Passover because of the act of God in **passing over** the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, sparing their firstborn but killing the firstborn of the Egyptians, man and beast. The Passover day, the 14th day of the first month, was to be kept throughout all generations as a memorial of this event: "And **this day** shall be a memorial to you. And you shall KEEP it **a feast to the LORD** throughout your generations. **You shall keep it a feast as a law forever**" (Ex. 12:14).

Now that we understand the Scriptural meaning of the name "Passover," we need to fully understand what it means to KEEP the Passover.

What Constitutes Keeping the Passover?

The traditional Jewish interpretation of the Scriptural command to keep the Passover on the 14th is that only the killing of the lambs was required on that day. This traditional interpretation is supported by some scholars. We are told that "...Leviticus 23:5 states, 'on the 14th of the first month, between the two evenings, is the Lord's Passover.' This shows that whenever a precise time is given, the emphasis was on the slaughter of the lamb, not subsequent events such as eating. The only part of the ceremony specified for 'the 14th between the two evenings,' is the slaughter of the lamb. The eating and other aspects of it did not have to come at that time" (Dr. Robert L. Kuhn and Dr. Lester L. Grabbe, *The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, pp. 14-15).

Is this what it meant to KEEP the Passover day as "a feast to the LORD"? Did it mean only to kill the Passover lambs? Is that all God required for the keeping of the Passover?

In order to justify their tradition, the Jews claim that all that needed to be done on the 14th was to kill the Passover lambs. But what about roasting the lamb? Did not roasting the lamb constitute keeping the Passover? What about eating the Passover lamb? Did not eating the Passover lamb constitute keeping the Passover? Were not all aspects of keeping the Passover to be completed on the 14th? What does the Bible teach? What is the true meaning of God's command to "keep" the Passover?

God's commands and ordinances for keeping the Passover are clearly recorded for us in Exodus 12. These instructions must be carefully studied in order to fully understand the answer to the question of whether Israel's first Passover was kept entirely on the 14th day of the month.

God's commands to Moses in Exodus 12 show us the step-by-step procedures required for keeping the Old Testament Passover. It is clear that the act of slaying the lambs was only one part of keeping the Passover. The nine steps for keeping the Old Testament Passover were as follows:

> 1) Select an unblemished male lamb less than one year old on the 10th day of the first month (Ex. 12:3).
> 2) Kill the lamb on the 14th day of the first month at dusk [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, "between the two evenings"]. Share the lamb with a neighbor if one's own family was too small to eat it. Do not break a bone of the lamb (Ex. 12:4, 6, 46).
> 3) Strike the side posts and lintel of the door of the house with some of the blood (Ex. 12:7).
> 4) Roast the whole lamb—head and legs and edible entrails—with fire (Ex. 12:9).
> 5) Do not boil the meat in water or eat it raw (Ex. 12:9).
> 6) Eat the flesh in that night with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Ex. 12:8).
> 7) Allow no alien to eat it unless circumcised (Ex. 12:43-44).
> 8) Eat it in the same house where it was slain. Do not carry any of it out of the house (Ex. 12:46).
> 9) Burn any remains, such as the bones and fat, the skin and guts, with fire by morning (Ex. 12:10).

These were the commands of God for Israel's first Passover. If the children of Israel had not observed all nine steps for the Passover exactly as God commanded, the Passover would not have been fully "kept," and the Lord would not have spared the firstborn of Israel.

At their next Passover, the first one in the wilderness after the tabernacle was set up and dedicated, the nine rules for "**keeping**" the Passover are called statutes and ordinances: "Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at its appointed time. In the fourteenth day of this month, between the two evenings, **you shall keep it** in its appointed time. **You shall keep it** according to ALL ITS STATUTES, and **according to ALL THE ORDINANCES of it**" (Num. 9:2-3).

This Scripture shows that the nine rules for the Passover, here called statutes and ordinances, were to be observed in all the years that followed. All nine ordinances were to be observed on the 14th day of the month! It is quite clear in Numbers 9 that all the statutes and all the ordinances that were established at the first Passover were to be observed by the children of Israel. We find no later instructions given in Scripture that in any way alter or modify the manner in which the Passover was originally commanded to be observed.

(*Please note that in Numbers 9, God instituted a provision concerning the keeping of the Passover if one were unclean or on a journey outside the land at the commanded time for observing the Passover, which was on the 14th day of the first month. In such cases, the Passover was to be observed on the 14th day of the second month, but according to ALL the statutes and ALL the ordinances that God had commanded. See Numbers 9:6-14. We will thoroughly study Numbers 9 in Chapter Nine. At this point we will focus on* ***what constitutes keeping the Passover***.)

Keeping the Passover, according to God's commands in Exodus 12, included **eating** the Passover. When we carefully examine the commands in Exodus 12, we find ten verses that directly refer to eating the Passover (verses 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48). In fact, **eating the Passover was the key part** to keeping the Passover. If the Passover was not eaten in that night, then no Passover was kept!

God commanded, "This *is* the ordinance of the Passover. No stranger shall **EAT** of it. But every man's servant that is bought for silver, when you have circumcised him, then he shall **EAT** of it....All the congregation of Israel shall **KEEP** it. And when a stranger shall dwell with you, and desires to **KEEP** the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and **KEEP** it. And he shall be as one that is born in the land. But no uncircumcised person shall **EAT** of it" (Ex. 12:43-48).

Here we see very clearly in the Word of God that to KEEP the Passover meant to EAT the Passover. Since the Passover was to be kept on the 14th day of the first month, it had to be eaten on the night of the 14th, not on the night of the 15th. The Passover lamb was not to be killed on the 14th and then eaten on the 15th. KEEPING the Passover on the 14th meant EATING it during the 14th, because the Passover cannot be kept unless it is eaten! KEEPING the Passover on the 14th meant observing all nine ordinances on that day, as commanded by God, including killing and eating the lamb.

If any of these ordinances were omitted or were observed at the wrong time, it is obvious that the Passover would not have been kept as God commanded! According to Scripture, the nine ordinances for keeping the Passover were all to be carried out on the 14th day of the first month. Keeping the first ordinance of the Passover, the killing of the lambs, on the 14th,

and keeping the remaining ordinances on the 15th, does not constitute keeping the Passover as God commanded in Exodus 12. A PASSOVER THAT IS EATEN ON THE 15TH IS NOT THE PASSOVER THAT GOD COMMANDED.

Jesus and His Disciples Knew That KEEPING the Passover Meant EATING THE PASSOVER

Jesus and His disciples knew that keeping the Passover meant eating the Passover. When it was time to keep His last Passover (the disciples did not know it would be His last Passover), as they were walking into Jerusalem, Jesus gave His disciples these instructions: "And He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go *and* prepare the **Passover** for us that we may **EAT**.' But they said to Him, 'Where do You desire *that* we prepare it?' And He said to them, 'Watch, *and* when you come into the city, you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters; and you shall say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest chamber, where **I may EAT the Passover** with My disciples?' " And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there [at that house] prepare....With *earnest* desire **I have desired to EAT this Passover with you** before I suffer. For I tell you that I will not EAT of it again until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God' " (Luke 22:8-12, 15-16).

These verses show clearly that Jesus and His disciples knew and understood that keeping the Passover meant eating the Passover. There was no question about it! There was no doubt whatsoever!

The religious leaders of the Jews, who by Jesus' time had replaced the ordinances of God with their traditions, understood that keeping the Passover required **eating** the Passover. However, they ate their Passover on the 15th, a day later than Jesus and His disciples, who kept the Passover on the 14th, as commanded in Scripture: "...But they [the religious leaders] did not go into the judgment hall, so that they would not be defiled, but that they might **EAT** the Passover" (John 18:28). This Scripture does **not** state that they did not go into the judgment hall lest they should not be able to **kill** their Passover lambs. The emphasis is on **eating** the Passover lamb, not killing the Passover lamb. It is evident that the Jews of Jesus' day still considered **eating** the Passover as **keeping** the Passover.

There can be no doubt whatsoever! After examining the Passover commands in the book of Exodus, the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke, and the example of the religious leaders as recorded by John, it is absolutely clear that keeping the Passover includes EATING the Passover.

Understanding the Hebrew Words

A comparison of the words that are used in the Hebrew text will confirm that keeping or observing the Passover required more than the sacrificing of the lambs:

1) The Hebrew word *asah* in Exodus 12:47-48 means "to observe, keep or accomplish." Nowhere in the Old Testament is *asah* used to signify the killing of a sacrifice.

2) The Hebrew word *shacht*, which is used in the command in Exodus 12:6, means "to slaughter, to sacrifice, to kill or to offer (a killed sacrifice)" (*The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*). The children of Israel were instructed "to kill," or *shacht*, the Passover lamb. This same Hebrew word is used throughout the Old Testament in reference to the killing of sacrifices.

3) The Hebrew word translated "eat" in Exodus 12:48 is *akal*, which means "to eat, to consume, to dine, to devour" (*The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*).

In Exodus 12:47-48, which records the statutes and ordinances for the Passover, we find the word *akal*, "to eat," used in conjunction with the word *asah*, "to keep." The Bible itself is our evidence that **keeping** the Passover requires **eating** the Passover. Nothing could be clearer than these plain commands of God. This is how we are to let the Bible interpret itself: "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."

The Hebrew word *asah*, "to observe" or "to keep," has a much broader meaning than the Hebrew word *shacht*, "to kill" or "to sacrifice." Hence, it is erroneous to claim that simply killing (*shacht*) the Passover lambs constituted keeping the Passover, or that the slaughter of the lambs was all that God commanded to be done on the 14th. In order for the Passover to be kept (*asah*), it had to be eaten (*akal*)!

There is additional proof in the book of Ezra that **keeping** the Passover means **eating** the Passover. When we examine the Hebrew text, we find that all three of the above Hebrew words are used in Ezra's account of the epochal Passover kept after the dedication of the temple by those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity: "And the children of the captivity **KEPT** [Hebrew *asah*, which means "to keep" or "to observe"] the Passover on the **FOURTEENTH *DAY*** of the first month....And they **KILLED** [Hebrew *shacht*, which means "to kill" or "to sacrifice"] the Passover *lamb* for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel **ATE** [Hebrew *akal*] *the Passover lamb,* all who had come again out of exile...**And *they* kept** [Hebrew *asah*] the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy..." (Ezra 6:19-22).

The three Hebrew verbs that are used in Ezra's account show that the complete meaning of **keeping** the Passover involved both **killing and eating**. Ezra specifically records that the Jews who had returned from their captivity in Babylon kept the Passover by killing and eating the lambs on the 14th day of the first month. The entire Passover was observed on the 14th, as commanded by God in Exodus 12.

In the next chapter, we will undertake a detailed study of the Hebrew terms that God used to specify the commanded time for the killing of the lambs and the eating of the Passover.

CHAPTER THREE

BEN HA ARBAYIM—"BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS"—THE VITAL KEY TO UNDERSTANDING

Let's examine God's commands to the children of Israel through Moses for observing the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the book of Leviticus we read, "These are the appointed seasons of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season.

"In the first month, on the **fourteenth** day of the month **at dusk**, is the LORD's passover. And on the **fifteenth** day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD; seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work. And ye shall bring an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days; in the seventh day is a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work" (Lev. 23:4-8, *JPSA*).

This Scripture specifically states that the Passover is on the 14th day of the month "**at dusk**." The Hebrew phrase that is translated "**at dusk**" in this passage from the *JPSA* version is *ben ha arbayim*. The same Hebrew phrase is translated "**at even**" in the *King James Version*. The use of these words by the translators of the *KJV* has led many to confuse the phrase *ben ha arbayim* with another Hebrew phrase that is also translated "**at even**," or "**evening**."

To show that the words "**at even**" do not accurately represent the Hebrew wording that is used in the Passover command, some editions of the *KJV* add a marginal notation with the words "between the two evenings." This is a literal translation of the phrase *ben ha arbayim*. (Please note: The phrase *ben ha arbayim* is spelled phonetically as *beyn ha' arbayim*; however, we will retain the spelling of *ben ha arbayim*.)

In order to understand God's commands for observing the Passover, it is vital to understand the meaning of this key Hebrew phrase.

Relying on Strong's Concordance Leads to Misunderstanding

It is not possible to understand the meaning of the phrase *ben ha arbayim* by relying solely on *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. The reason is this: *Strong's* makes no distinction between the two different Hebrew phrases that are translated into the English words "**at even**" and "**evening**." *Strong's* numbers every occurrence of "even" and "evening" in the *KJV* as #6153, and in *Strong's* Hebrew and Chaldee dictionary that word is listed and defined as *ereb* (also spelled *erev*). In all eleven passages where *ben ha arbayim* is used in the Scriptures, *Strong's* concordance numbers and

defines it as #6153, including it with *ereb*. The Hebrew noun *ereb*, or *erev*, which refers to the setting of the sun, is used numerous times in the Old Testament in the phrase *ba erev*, and is generally translated "evening" or "at even" in the *KJV*.

While it is acceptable to translate the phrase *ba erev* as "evening" or "at even," it is NOT proper to translate *ben ha arbayim* in this manner. The two phrases have COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MEANINGS. We will study *ba erev* in detail in the next chapter of this book.

Despite the distinct difference between *ba erev* and *ben ha arbayim*, the two phrases are listed together by Strong under the single Hebrew word *ereb*. There are two reasons for this misleading listing in *Strong's* concordance. First, concordances do not have listings for phrases. Because concordances list only single words, *Strong's* does not have a listing for either *ba erev* or *ben ha arbayim*. All occurrences of the phrase *ba erev* are accordingly listed under the noun *ereb*, or *erev*. Second, because *arbayim* is formed from the root word *ereb*, all occurrences of *arbayim* are also listed under this Hebrew noun. The word *ben*, or *beyn*, which is a Hebrew preposition, is listed in *Strong's* as # 996. The definite article *ha* is not listed by Strong.

The meaning of the phrase *ben ha arbayim* cannot be determined simply by consulting a Biblical concordance, such as *Strong's*, or even a Hebrew lexicon, which lists only the individual words. Hebrew words may vary widely in their meaning, depending on how they are used in the Hebrew text. The structure of the Hebrew text is not explained in concordances and lexicons. This information can be found only in books on Hebrew grammar and syntax.

By numbering and defining every occurrence of the phrase *ben ha arbayim* under the noun *ereb*, *Strong's* concordance has added to the confusion about the correct time for observing the Passover. Many ministers and church congregations have been led to a false understanding of the commanded time because they have relied on *Strong's* word numbering and definitions. While *Strong's* concordance may be a valuable tool for study, it should never be used as a determining factor in establishing doctrine, nor should it be used to define complex linguistic expressions such as the phrase that is used in the Passover command. The true meaning of the phrase *ben ha arbayim* cannot be determined by basing one's understanding on *Strong's* word numbering and definitions. We can arrive at a true understanding of the commanded time for the Passover by carefully studying the use of *ben ha arbayim* in its Scriptural context.

This Hebrew phrase, which occurs in the Passover command in Leviticus 23, is also used in the command to keep the Passover in Numbers 9: "And the LORD spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying: Let the children of Israel keep [Hebrew *asah*] the Passover in its appointed season. In the **FOURTEENTH DAY** of this month, **AT DUSK** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*], you shall keep [Hebrew *asah*] it in its appointed

season; according to ALL the statutes of it, and according to ALL the ordinances thereof, shall you keep it" (Num. 9:1-3, *JPSA*).

Notice Everett Fox's more precise translation of the Passover command in Leviticus 23:4-6: "These are the appointed-times of YHWH, proclamations of holiness, which you are to proclaim at their appointed-times: on the first New-Moon [month], on **the fourteenth** after the New Moon, **between the setting-times** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*] (is) Passover to YHWH. On **the fifteenth day** after this New-Moon (is) the pilgrimage-festival of *matzot* [unleavened bread] to YHWH..." (*The Schocken Bible*: Volume I; hereafter designated as *SB*).

Fox's translation of Numbers 9:2-5 also shows the precise meaning of the Hebrew text: "The Children of Israel are to sacrifice the Passover-offering at its appointed time: on **the fourteenth day** after this New-Moon, **between the setting-times** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*], you are to sacrifice it at its appointed-time; according to all its laws, according to all its regulations, you are to sacrifice it. So Moshe [Moses] spoke (instructions) to the Children of Israel, to sacrifice the Passover-offering. And they sacrificed the Passover-offering in the first (New Moon) [month], on **the fourteenth day** after the New Moon, **between the setting-times** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*], in the Wilderness of Sinai. According to all that YHWH had commanded Moshe [Moses], thus did the Children of Israel" (*SB*).

Numbers 9 clearly confirms God's command to keep the Passover on the 14th day of the first month—not on the 15th. As recorded in Numbers 9, all nine requirements of the Passover ceremony—ALL THE STATUTES and ALL THE ORDINANCES, were to be observed on the 14th. Under the Old Covenant, the Passover ceremony began with the slaying of the lambs. Exodus 12 shows the set time for slaying the Passover lambs:

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats; and ye shall keep it unto [until] the fourteenth day of the same month; and **the WHOLE ASSEMBLY of the congregation of Israel** shall kill it **AT DUSK** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]" (Ex. 12:5-6, *JPSA*).

As in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 9, the phrase *ben ha arbayim* has been translated "at dusk" in the *JPSA*. In the *KJV*, this same Hebrew phrase has been translated "at even" in Numbers 9:3 and "in the evening" in Exodus 12:6, but with the accompanying marginal definition "between the two evenings." Here is Fox's translation of Exodus 12:6: "It [the Passover lamb] shall be for you in safekeeping, until [up to] the fourteenth day after this New Moon [month], and they are to slay it—the entire assembly of the community of Israel—**between the setting-times** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]" (*SB*).

In order to understand the exact time of day on the 14th that the lambs were to be slain, we need to determine the Scriptural meaning of the phrase ***ben ha arbayim***. This Hebrew phrase reveals the specific time of day that the Passover was to begin.

What is the meaning of the phrase *ben ha arbayim*, "between the two evenings" or "between the setting-times"? Does it mean the time between the evening of one day and the evening of the next day? Could the Passover lambs be slain at any time in this 24-hour period? Does it mean between noon, the point when the sun is at its zenith, and sunset, when the sun has completed its descent? Does it mean from the mid-point in the afternoon, approximately 3 PM, until sunset ending the 14th? Does it mean from sunset until dark, at the beginning of the 14th? How can we really know?

Should we rely on scholars' interpretations of this ancient Hebrew phrase? Can they give us an accurate definition and proper understanding? Do they honestly and objectively examine the Scriptural usage? And if not, why not?

Should we accept the traditional Jewish interpretation of *ben ha arbayim*, which arose many centuries after the Passover was instituted, and which proclaims that it is the time from mid-afternoon to sunset? Does this interpretation fit the ordinances of the Passover that God commanded through Moses?

Are the Rabbis Correct in Their Traditional Explanation?

What does *ben ha arbayim* really mean? The rabbis claim to know the answer. Let us examine their traditional rabbinical explanation of this Hebrew phrase. It would be natural to expect the rabbis to know the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim* because, after all, they profess to be authorities in the Hebrew text. Most certainly, they ought to be experts in the Old Testament, shouldn't they?

Now then, since they claim to be teachers of Scripture, we will put them and their explanations of *ben ha arbayim* to the test, to see whether they are "rightly dividing the Word of God," or whether they have replaced the truth of God's Word with their own traditions.

We will first examine the works of the most renowned Jewish mystic and Kabbalist scholar, Rabbi Rashi. His work on the Old Testament Scriptures has been published in Hebrew with a Hebrew commentary and an English linear translation. His work on the Hebrew Torah is considered to be one of the best, perhaps the very best, that is available to the general public.

Here is what Rashi writes in his commentary about the usage of the term *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 12:6: "At dusk—From six hours (after noon) and upward is called *ben ha arbayim*, when the sun declines towards the place of its setting to be darkened. And the expression *ben ha arbayim* appears in my sight (to refer to) those hours between the 'evening' of day, and the 'evening' of night; the 'evening' of day is at the beginning of the seventh hour [1 PM] from (the time that) 'the shadows of evening are stretched out,' and the 'evening' of night is at the beginning of night" (*The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary*, Exodus 12:6, p. 102).

Rabbi Rashi states that *ben ha arbayim*, which literally means "between the setting-times," refers to the time period from 1 PM, the "evening" of day, until sunset, the "evening" of night. His definition places the slaying of the Passover lambs during the afternoon of the 14th—specifically, the time from one hour after noon until sunset of the 14th, at which time the 15th day begins. This interpretation of *ben ha arbayim* does not allow time to complete ALL NINE ORDINANCES of the Passover—including roasting and eating the lambs, and burning the remains—ON THE 14TH, as commanded in Scripture.

Despite such obvious contradiction, Judaism has for centuries upheld this faulty definition of *ben ha arbayim*, teaching that the Passover lambs were slain late on the 14th and were eaten after sunset of the 14th, when the night of the 15th had begun. This traditional rabbinical interpretation of *ben ha arbayim* conflicts with the clear commands of God as recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. The commands in Exodus 12 specify that the Passover lambs were to be slain, roasted and eaten on the 14th. The command in Leviticus 23:5 confirms the observance of the Passover on the 14th day, and Numbers 9:3 shows that it was absolutely mandatory to fulfill ALL the ordinances of the Passover on the 14th. There is no allowance whatsoever for even one ordinance to be omitted on the 14th day! It appears that the rabbis have blinded their eyes to these clear commands in order to justify their own traditions.

The traditional rabbinical interpretation of *ben ha arbayim*—the commanded time for slaying the lambs—has been used by another Kabbalist scholar for his English translation of the Scriptures. In his translation of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan promotes the traditional definition of *ben ha arbayim* as the afternoon of the 14th. Here is his translation: "Hold it in safekeeping until the fourteenth day of this month. The entire community of Israel shall then slaughter [their sacrifices] **in the afternoon**" (Ex. 12:6, *The Living Torah*).

The Scriptures themselves will expose Kaplan's translation as a distorted view of the Passover command in Exodus 12. When we examine the use of *ben ha arbayim* in the context of Exodus 16, it will become evident that his interpretation of *ben ha arbayim* is wholly incorrect. Remember, we must let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. Religious traditions of Judaism and personal opinions of rabbis or other religious leaders should not be inserted into the Scriptures. Interpretations should be clearly noted as interpretations, and personal opinions should be noted as personal opinions. Human rationale should never be placed above the authority of Scripture, which has been inspired by God. Those who alter or misinterpret the Scriptures in order to further their human traditions will receive the judgment of God!

Before we examine the use of *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 16, let's find out how Rabbi Alfred Edersheim, a noted Messianic rabbi, views the command

to slay the Passover lambs. Although he does not define the phrase *ben ha arbayim*, he gives the schedule of events for the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. In his narration of the temple and its services, he describes the daytime portion of the 14th as the "eve of the Passover," supporting a 14/15 Passover sequence in which the Passover lambs were killed at the temple late on the 14th and were eaten on the 15th.

In his book *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services, As They Were at the Time of Christ*, he states the following (Note: Edersheim assumes that the disciples Peter and John, when preparing for Jesus' last Passover, went to the temple to have the lamb sacrificed. The account of Jesus' last Passover in the Gospel of John shows that this assumption is incorrect. However, for the sake of a complete quotation, it is included here.): "While the Saviour still tarried with the other disciples outside the city, Peter and John were completing their preparations. They followed the motley crowd, all leading their sacrificial lambs up the Temple-mount. Here they were grouped into three divisions. Already the evening sacrifice had been offered.

"Ordinarily it was slain at 2:30 PM, and offered at about 3:30. But on the eve of the Passover, as we have seen, it was killed an hour earlier; and if the 14th of Nisan fell on a Friday—or rather from Thursday at eve to Friday at eve—two hours earlier [1:30 PM], so as to avoid any needless breach of the Sabbath [According to Scripture, the days of the week are reckoned from sunset to sunset; hence the weekly Sabbath begins with Friday evening.]" (pages 222-23). *The Scriptural method of reckoning the day is explained in detail in Appendix A.*

In his narration, Edersheim basically concurs with the interpretation given by Rashi and Kaplan that *ben ha arbayim* is the time period from approximately one hour after noon to sunset. His historical narration is describing the temple sacrificing of the Passover lambs. The temple sacrifice of the lambs took place on the afternoon of the 14th, exactly as stated by Edersheim. But was this the correct time for slaying the lambs? Was the traditional temple practice in accord with the Scriptural commands for sacrificing the Passover? Were the Passover lambs always slain on the afternoon of the 14th? Is that the true meaning of the command in Exodus 12? Or does the Scriptural command differ from what has been described by Edersheim, Rashi and Kaplan?

In a noted Hebrew-Chaldee lexicon, we find this explanation of *ben ha arbayim* under the listing *erev*: "Between the two evenings, Ex. 16:12; 30:8, [is] used as marking the space of time during which the paschal lamb was slain, Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3; and the evening sacrifice was offered, Ex. 29:30, 41; Num 28:4" (*Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*).

Gesenius has correctly stated that the Passover lambs were slain during the same space of time that the evening sacrifice was offered—*ben ha arbayim*, or "between the two evenings." Gesenius gives two conflicting

views of the specific time of day that this phrase is designating: "...according to the opinion of the Karaites and Samaritans (which is favoured by the words of Deut. 16:6), the time between sunset and deep twilight. The Pharisees, however, and the Rabbinists considered the time when the sun began to descend to be called the *first evening* (Arab. 'little evening'; when it begins to draw towards evening); and the second evening to be the real sunset" (Ibid.).

The Rabbinic and Pharisaic opinion—that *ben ha arbayim* is the period of time before sunset—has for centuries been honored as a fundamental teaching of Judaism. As a result of this interpretation of *ben ha arbayim*, until the destruction of the second temple many Jews killed their Passover lambs late on the afternoon of the 14th, participating with the priests and Levites in the traditional sacrifice of the Passover. Josephus gives the following account of the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs: "So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast, which is called Passover, when they slay their sacrifices from the ninth hour to the eleventh [approximately 3 PM to 5 PM]..." (*Wars of the Jews*, Bk. VI, Ch. IX, Sec. 3).

This historical record of an afternoon sacrifice relates only to the killing of the Passover lambs at the temple. Josephus is not describing the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs at the houses of the people, as commanded by God. It is important to understand that the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs was a LATER INSTITUTION. It was, in fact, introduced about 800 years after Israel's first Passover.

In his narration of Israel's first Passover, Josephus shows that the Scriptural ordinances for observing the Passover—which included the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs on the 14th—were still being practiced by the Jews during his lifetime. He writes, "But when the fourteenth day was come, and all were ready to depart, they offered the sacrifice, and purified their houses, using bunches of hyssop for that purpose; and when they had supped, they burnt the remainder of the flesh, as just ready to depart. Whence it is that WE DO STILL OFFER THIS SACRIFICE IN LIKE MANNER TO THIS DAY, and call this festival *Pascha*..." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. II, Ch. 14, Sec. 6, emphasis added).

Josephus is clearly referring to the Passover ordinances in Exodus 12, as he specifically names several of them in this account of how the Passover ceremony was observed. As Josephus shows in this narration, all the ordinances of God for the Passover were still being observed side by side with the temple sacrifice of the lambs during his lifetime. All the statutes and all the ordinances that were observed at Israel's first Passover—including the domestic sacrifice of the lambs—are included in his statement: "WE DO STILL OFFER THIS SACRIFICE IN LIKE MANNER TO THIS DAY [emphasis added]."

Ignoring this plain statement by Josephus, some scholars look wholly to the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs to explain when the Passover should be observed. Their one-sided explanation makes it appear

that the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs was no longer practiced, and that the Scriptural ordinances of the Passover were no longer in effect. This false view of history is then used to support the traditional Jewish practice of killing the lambs late on the afternoon of the 14th and eating the Passover on the 15th. Some claim that this Jewish tradition, which was introduced centuries after the Passover in Egypt, is the way the Passover has always been observed.

Many churches have been taught to rely on Jewish tradition as a guide in observing the Christian Passover ceremony. They have been told by ministers and scholars alike that the Bible supports a 15th Passover. Christians who fall prey to such teachings do not realize that these scholars are following the interpretations of men. Ignoring the clear commands of God in Exodus 12 and Numbers 9, they have accepted the Rabbinic and Pharisaic interpretation of *ben ha arbayim* as their authority. Their writings clearly support the traditional Jewish view. Notice: "But exactly what did the term 'between the two evenings' include? We know that the LATER JEWS DEFINED IT as the period between about mid-afternoon and sundown. Is this interpretation a permissible one? ONE PASSAGE certainly gives us GOOD REASON TO THINK that the term between the two evenings includes a period before sunset. Ex. 29:38-39 states: 'This is that which you shall offer upon the altar every day on a continual basis: two yearling rams, the one in the morning and the second between the two evenings' (*JPSA*). (Also in Num. 28:3-8.) These ARE APPARENTLY THE ONLY PASSAGES which give any precise information about 'between the two evenings.' They INDICATE that the daily offering consists of a morning offering and an offering BEFORE SUNSET when the new day began. Yet, the second offering that day was offered 'between the two evenings,' showing that the first evening took place before sunset" (Dr. Robert L. Kuhn and Dr. Lester L. Grabbe, *The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 13, emphasis added). *For a technical exegesis of the command for the daily offering, see Appendix L.*

Key phrases in these scholars' statements have been emphasized to show the weakness in their arguments. The limited perspective of their research is revealed by their words "the LATER JEWS DEFINED IT." What about the original meaning, as revealed in Scripture? After defining <u>ben ha arbayim</u> as "between about mid-afternoon and sundown," they ask, "Is this interpretation a PERMISSIBLE ONE? Their response shows a lack of conclusive evidence: "ONE PASSAGE...GOOD REASON TO THINK...ARE APPARENTLY THE ONLY PASSAGES...INDICATE."

What a shame that this kind of slanted presentation is put forth as objective research by noted scholars! This is truly reasoning backwards—using a much later practice to define the original meaning of the ancient Hebrew phrase *ben ha arbayim*. Such misguided reasoning is inexcusable for scholars holding doctorates in theology and Biblical languages, reputed to be experts, when the truth is in the Bible and is clearly revealed in other passages. Those passages are not discussed by these scholars in their writings. Can it be that these other Scriptures were deliberately ignored in order to gain acceptance for the traditional Jewish interpretation?

Although they promote the later Rabbinic view, these same scholars admit that *ben ha arbayim* originally was understood to mean **the period of time following sunset**. Here is their admission: " 'Between the two evenings' is usually taken to mean between sundown and dark, a period of about an hour or so....This may be correct as far as the original Passover instructions were concerned. At least some later Jewish groups interpreted the original instructions in this way, including the Karaites and Samaritans. However, such a narrow definition is possible only where a small number of animals are slain or where all can be slain at the same time as was the case with the original Passover" (Ibid., p. 12).

What a remarkable admission this is, in light of the fact that these scholars have dedicated their entire dissertation to denouncing and rejecting the definition of *ben ha arbayim* as the period of time between sunset and dark! They are aware that this definition fits the Passover instructions in Exodus 12, but they have rejected it because it does not fit the Jewish tradition of the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. They are, in effect, rejecting the ordinance of God and choosing the tradition of men.

Their position is plainly revealed in the following statement: "If there was any other legitimate way to interpret the expression [*ben ha arbayim*] when considerations of the time [required for the temple sacrifice] did not allow slaughter of the Passover lambs in the twilight period, WE HAVE NO RECORD OF IT" (Ibid., p. 13, emphasis added). In choosing to follow Jewish tradition and to promote the Jewish interpretation of *ben ha arbayim*, they are either ignoring or overlooking the plain commands of God, which were given at the institution of the Passover in Egypt, and which have been preserved in His Word.

Their challenge to any who would dare to question their position shows that their final authority is not the Word of God, but human scholarship. They boldly state, "**ANY ATTEMPT to make the phrase 'between the two evenings' [ben ha arbayim] refer to the beginning of the 14th is CONTRARY to all ancient scholarship known and also GOES AGAINST modern scholars who have discussed the subject**" (Ibid., p. 32, emphasis added).

In the following chapters of this book, we will prove that these statements are false. **The definition of *ben ha arbayim* as the beginning of the 14th, immediately after sunset, is not "contrary to all ancient scholarship," nor is it contrary to modern scholarship**. As we will see, one of the leading authorities in Biblical Hebrew, Everett Fox, defines *ben ha arbayim* as the time between sunset and dark. To determine whose definition is correct, we will examine all the available evidence—both Scriptural and historical. This evidence will expose the false scholarship of men and their misinterpretations of the Word of God.

Defying the False Scholarship of Men

We do not have to kowtow in trembling fear and be intimidated by so-called scholars simply because they claim intellectual superiority. **There**

is a legitimate, Biblically sound, chronologically defined, Scripturally documented way to determine the original meaning of *ben ha arbayim*, and to prove beyond any shadow of doubt whatsoever that *ben ha arbayim* is the time period from sunset until dark, at the beginning of the day.

With the Word of God as our authority, we can challenge the methods of these scholars and refute their conclusions. If their so-called scholarly methods are not correct, and are found wanting, and are plain wrong, they should never be accepted by anyone! God does not require it! Nor does he accept such arrogant and impious handling of His Word of truth. In fact, the Word of God will expose such teachings for what they are: the traditions of men, which have replaced the commandments of God!

The apostle Paul, when confronted by those of the circumcision party who were trying to subvert the Galatians from the truth of the gospel, did not yield or subject himself to them for one moment: "...To whom we did not yield in subjection [to their demands of circumcision for new converts], *not* even for one hour, so that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But *the gospel that I preach did not come* from those reputed to be something. (Whatever they were does not make any difference to me; God does not accept *the* person of a man.)" (Gal. 2:5-6). Paul publicly withstood the apostle Peter to his face, because Peter was carried away with the politics of the circumcision party from Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11-21).

We will do as the apostle Paul! We will stand with the truth of the Word of God and withstand those who oppose God, and we will expose the false arguments and views of so-called scholars. We will prove from Scripture that the statements made by Kuhn and Grabbe are utterly false. THE WORD OF GOD WILL PROVE THEM WRONG!

The Hebrew term *ben ha arbayim* is of ancient origin and is found only in the Pentateuch. It is therefore imperative to let the Bible interpret itself in the use of this term, rather than reading into the Bible the opinions and interpretations of men, which attempt to justify later practices and traditions. THE BIBLE MUST INTERPRET ITSELF! That is the only way to come to the knowledge of the truth of God and to understand the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim.*

In this chapter, we have seen that the Scriptures specifically designate the 14th day of the first month for the Passover to be observed, and that this observance began with the slaying of the lambs at *ben ha arbayim*. We have read the definitions of scholars, the records of Jewish history, and the interpretations of leading Jewish authorities, offering differing views of the meaning of *ben ha arbayim*—some placing it immediately after sunset, and some placing it in the afternoon hours before sunset. In order to determine which definition of *ben ha arbayim* is correct, we must first study the Scriptural usage of the Hebrew phrase *ba erev*, which is used to designate the time of sunset. In Chapter Four, we will examine this Hebrew phrase.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNDERSTANDING THE HEBREW TERM *BA EREV*

In the previous chapter, we learned that the commanded time for slaying the Passover lambs was *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times." The slaying of the lambs was the first of nine ordinances to be fulfilled on the Passover day. When we examined the interpretation of *ben ha arbayim* given by rabbis and scholars, we saw that they define "between the two evenings" as the period from a short time after noon until sunset. To support their definition, they point to the historical example of the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs, which occurred in the afternoon of the 14th day of the first month.

It is evident that the rabbis and scholars are relying on the traditions of Judaism to interpret the meaning of *ben ha arbayim* rather than the Scriptures. But we do not have to depend on the traditions of men to understand the meaning of this Hebrew phrase. God has given us an easy-to-understand, chronological sequence of events in His Word that reveals the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim*. When we examine the Scriptural usage of this Hebrew phrase, we will see that the Bible does not support Judaism's traditional interpretation of "between the two evenings" as the afternoon of the day.

In order to understand the Scriptural usage of *ben ha arbayim*, we must first understand the meaning of the Hebrew phrase *ba erev*, which is used numerous times in the Old Testament to denote time. The Scriptural definition of *ba erev* is the key that unlocks the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim*. When we understand the Scriptural meaning of these two Hebrew terms, we will be able to determine the precise time that the Passover was to be kept, beginning with the slaying of the lambs.

Leviticus 23 Defines BA EREV

Chapter 23 of the book of Leviticus will help us to understand the Scriptural meaning of *ba erev*. This chapter lists all the days that God set apart for His people to assemble before Him—including the weekly Sabbath, the Passover and the seven annual holy days of God. Each of these commanded convocations has a special meaning and significance, but it is God's commands for the Day of Atonement that are of particular importance to our understanding of *ba erev*. Let us examine His commands:

"Also, on the tenth *day* of this seventh month, is the Day of Atonement. *It shall be* a holy convocation to you. And you shall afflict your souls [by fasting without food or water; see Psa. 35:13, Ezra 10:6] and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.

"And **you shall do NO WORK** in that same day, for it *is* the Day of Atonement, in order to make an atonement for you before the LORD your

God, for whoever is not afflicted [fast without food and water] in that same day, he shall be **cut off from among his people**.

"And whoever **does any work** in that same day, **the same one WILL I DESTROY** from among his people. You shall do **NO MANNER OF WORK.** *It shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (Lev. 23:27-31).

Notice how important the Day of Atonement is! NO FOOD OR WATER COULD BE CONSUMED AND NO MANNER OF WORK COULD BE DONE WHATSOEVER! DEATH AND DESTRUCTION WOULD STRIKE THOSE WHO DID NOT FAST AND AFFLICT THEIR SOULS, OR WHO DID ANY MANNER OF WORK ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

Because of the severe punishment for violating the Day of Atonement, God did not want the children of Israel to be in any doubt whatsoever as to when that day would begin and when it would end! What a tragedy it would have been if some had claimed that the Day of Atonement began in the late afternoon, before sunset, and others had claimed that the Day of Atonement began when a person could see three stars at night, after sunset. There would have been as much as a six-hour difference in observing the Day of Atonement, if it were based on these differing interpretations and opinions of the rabbis. What confusion it would have created! Those poor souls who happened to follow the wrong opinion would have broken the Day of Atonement, which would have cost them their lives!

Since the punishment for breaking the Day of Atonement was DEATH, God left absolutely no room for doubt as to the exact time of the beginning and ending of the day. It is for this very reason that God issued a specific command pinpointing the exact beginning and ending of the Day of Atonement. Here is how God defines the day:

"It shall be unto you **a sabbath of solemn rest, and ye shall afflict your souls; IN THE NINTH DAY OF THE MONTH AT EVEN, FROM EVEN UNTO EVEN, shall ye keep your sabbath**" (Lev. 23:32, *JPSA*).

The words "at even" in this verse are translated from the Hebrew phrase *ba erev*, meaning "at sunset." This Hebrew phrase is formed from the preposition *ba* and the noun *erev*. The Hebrew noun *erev* literally means "the entering." Its specific meaning depends on the context in which it is used and the form in which it appears in the text. When used with the preposition *ba*, *erev* specifically refers to sunset. This definition is established by its usage in numerous Old Testament passages and has traditionally been acknowledged in the Jewish observance of the Day of Atonement.

The Schocken Bible reflects the precise meaning of *ba erev* in Leviticus 23:32: "It is Sabbath, a Sabbath-ceasing for you, you are to afflict yourselves; on the ninth (day) after the New-Moon, **at sunset** [Hebrew *ba erev*],

from sunset to sunset, you are to make-a-ceasing of your ceasing!" (*SB*)

"At sunset," or *ba erev*, is a very short period of time. It begins when the sun appears to touch the horizon, and ends when the sun drops below the horizon. The total duration of its setting is no more than 3-5 minutes. The term *ba erev* is very specific! This is why God commanded that the Day of Atonement be observed from *ba erev* to *ba erev*. The use of the preposition *ba* with the Hebrew noun *erev* eliminates any doubt or confusion as to the time at which the day begins and ends: "...in the ninth day of the month **at even** [Hebrew *ba erev*, beginning **at sunset**], **from even** [Hebrew *mn erev*, from sunset] **unto even** [Hebrew *ad erev*, **to sunset**], shall ye keep your Sabbath" (Lev. 23:32, *JPSA*). The use of the preposition *ba* with the Hebrew noun *erev* eliminates any doubt or confusion as to the time at which the day begins and ends.

That each day begins and ends at sunset is clearly established in Leviticus 23. In verse 27, we find a specific command that the Day of Atonement be observed on the tenth day of the month. In verse 32, *ba erev* on the ninth day of the month is clearly designated as the beginning of the Day of Atonement. These two Scriptural commands make it absolutely clear that *ba erev* marks the end of the ninth day and the beginning of the tenth day. The tenth day of the seventh month is from sunset, or *mn erev*, of the ninth day, until sunset, or *ad erev*, of the tenth day. There is no room for any other interpretation of Leviticus 23:32. The beginning and ending of the Day of Atonement is firmly established by the Scriptural record of God's command.

According to the Scriptural method of reckoning time, each day extends from sunset to sunset. This principle applies to the weekly Sabbath day. The Bible clearly teaches that the SEVENTH DAY is the Sabbath of the Lord. From sunset of the sixth day until sunset of the seventh day is the weekly Sabbath day. This is the true definition of the Sabbath day as reckoned Scripturally, from sunset to sunset.

Let's apply the Scriptural method of reckoning time to God's instructions for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as recorded in Exodus 12. Using the Scriptural definition of *ba erev*, we can determine the precise time at which the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins and ends.

Fox's translation of this verse confirms that *ba erev* is referring to sunset: "In the first (month), **on the fourteenth day after the New-Moon, AT SUNSET**, you are to eat *matzot* [unleavened bread], **until the twenty-first day of the month, AT SUNSET**" (Ex. 12:18, *SB*).

"In the first *month*, **on the fourteenth day** of the month AT SUNSET[Hebrew *ba erev*], you shall eat unleavened bread, **until** [up to that point in time] **the twenty-first day** of the month AT SUNSET [Hebrew *ba erev*]" (Ex. 12:18).

This verse clearly shows that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at sunset, or *ba erev*. The command of God in Leviticus 23:6 shows that it is the

sunset which ends the 14th and begins the 15th day of the month. Counting forward seven days from the sunset ending the 14th, we arrive at the sunset ending the 21st day, or *ba erev* "on the one and twentieth day." That is when the Feast of Unleavened Bread ends or a duration of seven full days.

By letting the Scriptures interpret God's command in Exodus 12, we can see how God Himself defines the duration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God's Word reveals the beginning point and the ending point of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There is no doubt or confusion when the Scriptural method of reckoning time is understood and correctly applied. The phrase *ba erev* removes any doubt as to when the seven days of unleavened bread begin and end.

The use of *ba erev* in Exodus 12 in the command for the Feast of Unleavened Bread is consistent with its use in Leviticus 23 in the command for observing the Day of Atonement. The use of *ba erev* in both commands confirms that this Hebrew term marks the beginning and end of each day.

Jews Understand that BA EREV Ends One Day and Begins the Next Day

The manner in which the Jews have traditionally harvested the wave sheaf shows their understanding of the Scriptural meaning of *ba erev*, or "at sunset." Their traditional practice requires absolute confirmation that the sun has set before the one who has been appointed to cut the sheaf can raise his sickle.

The wave sheaf was offered in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God's instructions for this special wave offering are found in Leviticus 23: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and say unto them, "When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest of it, then you shall bring *the premier* sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath [in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread] the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:9-11).

Note: There was a dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as to which Sabbath this verse is designating. The Pharisees applied this command to the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was the 15th day of the first month, or Nisan. In their view, the "morrow after the Sabbath"—the day for harvesting the wave sheaf—was always the 16th of Nisan. On the other hand, the Sadducees, who were in charge of the temple during the days of Jesus Christ, understood that God's command in Leviticus 23:11 was referring to the weekly Sabbath which occurred in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In years when the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread fell on the weekly Sabbath, both the Sadducees and the Pharisees would observe the 16th of Nisan as the day for the wave sheaf offering. Although the Sadducees and the Pharisees generally disagreed over the correct DAY for the wave sheaf offering, there was never any question about the correct TIME of the day for harvesting it.

Alfred Edersheim, a converted Pharisaic rabbi, records the details of the harvesting of the wave sheaf in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. His description of the traditional practice shows that the Jews have from ancient times understood and acknowledged that the day ends at sunset, or *ba erev*. They are fully aware that as soon as the sun has dropped below the horizon, it is the beginning of the next day.

As the children of Israel had done in Old Testament times, the Jews in New Testament times waited until the sun had gone down before harvesting the wave sheaf. They knew that "the next day after the Sabbath" began at sunset. The sunset that ended the Sabbath began the new day, "the next day after the Sabbath," on which the harvesting of the wave sheaf was to be done. No harvesting was permitted until the Sabbath was over. Once the sun dropped below the horizon, the Sabbath was past. It was the first instant of next day, by Scriptural reckoning, and harvesting could be done.

Here is Edersheim's description of the harvesting of the wave sheaf: "This Passover-sheaf was reaped in public the evening before it was offered, and it was to witness this ceremony that the crowd had gathered around the elders. Already on the 14th [of] Nisan the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reaped had been marked out, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down, according to custom, in the sheltered Ashes-Valley across Kidron. When the time for cutting the sheaf had arrived—that is, on the evening of the 15th [of] Nisan [by Pharisaic reckoning], even though it were a Sabbath [the journey to harvest was undertaken before the end of the Sabbath, but was within the prescribed traditional "Sabbath day's journey"], just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and basket, set to work.

"Clearly to bring out what was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: 'HAS THE SUN GONE DOWN?' 'With this sickle?' 'Into this basket?' 'On this Sabbath? (or first Passover-day)'—and lastly, 'Shall I reap?' Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down barley to the amount of one ephah, or about three pecks and three pints of our English measure" (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 619).

Remember that it takes only 3-5 minutes for the sun to set from the time that it first appears to touch the horizon. Considering the short duration of sunset, or *ba erev*, it is evident that the sun had dropped below the horizon by the time the traditional questions were answered and before the sheaf for the wave offering was cut. Edersheim confirms this fact by going on to state that the sun had fully set and that it was, at the time of the cutting, the next day, the 16th of Nisan.

In another book, which also describes the harvesting of the wave sheaf, Edersheim inserts the following footnote: "It was really done after sunset on the 15th, which was the beginning of the 16th of Nisan" (*The*

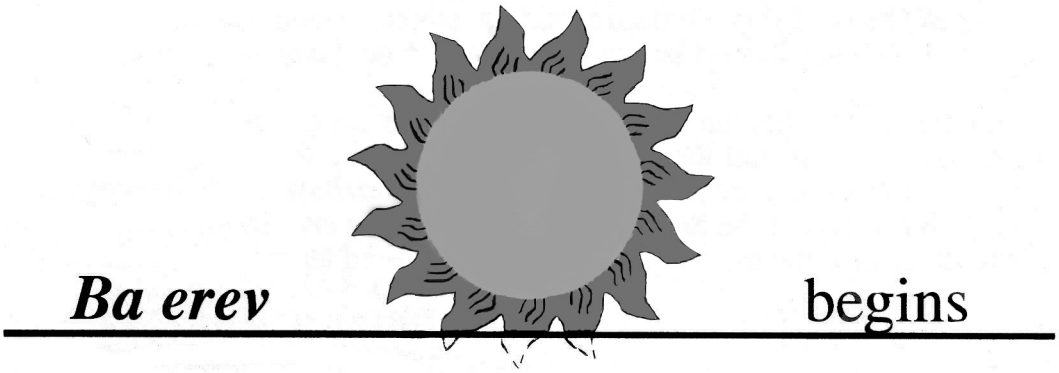
Temple, Its Ministry and Services, As They Were at the Time of Christ, p. 258).

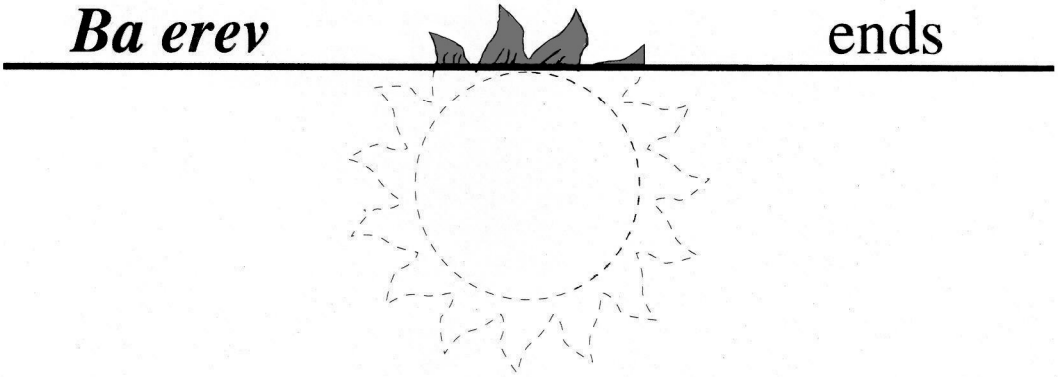
Edersheim's statements show conclusively that *ba erev*, "at sunset," was fully understood by the Jews as the point at which the present day ended and the next day began. His description of the ceremony for harvesting the wave sheaf also verifies that *ba erev* was a very short duration of time. The time of *ba erev* is correctly translated by Everett Fox and Coulter as "at sunset."

In summarizing this chapter on the phrase *ba erev*, or "at sunset," it is evident that, although the leaders of Judaism dispute the meaning of some Hebrew terms used in Scripture, the meaning of *ba erev* is without controversy: The Hebrew phrase ***ba erev*, or "at sunset," designates the end of one day and the beginning of the next day**. Judaism acknowledges, in both teaching and practice, that as soon as the sun has set below the horizon, a new day has begun.

We have seen that the Scriptures define *ba erev*, or "at sunset," as the point at which one day ends and the next day begins. In the following chapter we will examine the use of *ba erev* in context with *ben ha arbayim*, or "between the two evenings." By applying the Scriptural definition of *ba erev* in this context, we will be able to determine the meaning of the much disputed term *ben ha arbayim*.

Ba erev, or "at sunset" is the three-to-five minute period of time that begins when the sun appears to touch the horizon until the sun disappears below the horizon.





CHAPTER FIVE

DETERMINING THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF *BEN HA ARBAYIM*

What is the true meaning of the Hebrew phrase *ben ha arbayim*? The traditional Jewish interpretation defines it as the time from shortly after noon until sunset. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan has accordingly translated *ben ha arbayim* as "afternoon" in the Passover command in Exodus 12:6. He has done the same thing in Exodus 16:12: "I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Speak to them and say, In the afternoon [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*], you will eat meat and in the morning, you will have your fill of bread....That evening [Hebrew *ba erev*], a flock of quail came and covered the camp" (Ex. 16:12-13, *The Living Torah*).

Does this translation by Kaplan accurately convey the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim* as used by God in the Scriptures? Or does it present a false view of *ben ha arbayim* that does not come from the Word of God but from the traditions of ancient rabbis? Jesus condemned the religious leaders in His day for replacing God's commandments with their own traditions: "Then He said to them [the scribes and Pharisees], 'Full well do you reject the commandments of God, so that you may observe your *own* traditions!' " (Mark 7:9).

We do not need to rely on the traditions of rabbis and on scholars who follow them. There is a valid, Biblically based, chronologically sound, conclusive way to determine the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim*. God has preserved this knowledge for us in Exodus 16. By examining the context and chronological order of the events that are recorded in Exodus 16, we will be able to determine the exact point in time at which *ben ha arbayim* begins.

The Scriptural definition of *ben ha arbayim* is there to be found. Every Christian can discover the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim* for himself or herself, if he or she is willing to search the Scriptures with an open mind, as did the Bereans. In the book of Acts, the Bereans are commended for their zeal in seeking Scriptural truth: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, *for* they received the Word with all readiness of mind *and* examined the Scriptures daily *to see* if these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Let us follow the example of the Bereans. Let us examine the Scriptures with readiness of mind and seek out the knowledge that God has preserved for us.

Exodus 16 Unlocks the Meaning of BEN HA ARBAYIM

The events that are recorded in Exodus 16 give us a Scriptural key that will help us unlock the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim*. Let us begin our study

of these events by examining the context in which they occurred. The chapter begins with the arrival of the children of Israel at the wilderness of Sin: "And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, **on the fifteenth day of the second month** after their departing out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 16:1, *JPSA*).

This chapter continues the chronological record of the Exodus from Egypt. The first verse is important to our study because it shows the time setting of the events that follow. It is only thirty days after the Exodus began that these events took place, and only forty-five days after God's instructions to Moses for observing the Passover (Ex. 12:1-2). That is less than seven weeks. We are not dealing with a long period of time, such as years, decades or centuries, in which changes in language could result in changes in the definitions of words. When God used the term *ben ha arbayim* in the Passover command in Exodus 12, and forty-five days later used *ben ha arbayim* again, as recorded in Exodus 16, it conveyed the same meaning in both instances. There can be no doubt about it!

The events that are recorded in Exodus 16 will enable us to determine the true, Scriptural meaning and timing of *ben ha arbayim*. As we study the following events in Exodus 16, we will see that they give us a clear-cut chronological framework that reveals the exact time of day at which *ben ha arbayim* begins. The account of these events shows that the 15th day of the second month was, in fact, a weekly Sabbath. The chapter covers a whole week—from that Sabbath through the next Sabbath. As we read the account, we will see that on the morning of the following day—the 16th—the manna appeared for the first time, and it continued to appear each morning for a total of six days. No manna appeared on the seventh day because it was God's holy Sabbath. Counting back from that Sabbath, we can determine that the day the manna was promised, the 15th day of the second month, was also a weekly Sabbath.

Some claim that the 15th day could not have been a Sabbath of rest because Israel came to the wilderness of Sin "on the fifteenth day." They argue that this phrase indicates that Israel was still journeying after the 15th had begun at sunset. Is this a correct interpretation of the Scriptural account? Let us examine the phrase "on the fifteenth" in the Hebrew text.

The phrase that is translated "on the fifteenth" begins with the Hebrew preposition *ba*, the same preposition that is used to form the phrase *ba erev*. The preposition *ba* is used to denote "an actual time **in**, **at** or **when**" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 196). *Ba* may also be translated "on," as it is in the phrase "on the fifteenth" in Exodus 16:1. Does this phrase show that Israel was traveling on the 15th day?

In the King James translation of Exodus 16:1, it appears that the children of Israel arrived at the wilderness of Sin after the 15th day had begun. However, the Hebrew text does not link their arrival with the 15th day. In the Hebrew text, the phrase "on the fifteenth day" is linked with the

complaining of the children of Israel—not with their arrival. Consequently, this phrase should not be interpreted as showing that the children of Israel were traveling for a period of time on the 15th day. *For a detailed exegesis of Exodus 16:1, see Appendix G.*

"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which *is* between Elim and Sinai. And on the fifteenth day of the second month *after* their departing out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 16:1).

The phrase "on [*ba*] the fifteenth" must be interpreted in the context of the entire chapter. It is foolish to use this phrase to argue that the fifteenth day of the second month was not a weekly Sabbath when the events that are recorded in Exodus 16 offer conclusive evidence that it was. The account that we are given in this chapter enables us to determine the exact day of the week on which the 15th fell—and that day was indeed the seventh day of the week.

Bearing in mind this chronological setting, let's continue our examination of the account in Exodus 16. Verses 2 and 3 record that after arriving at the wilderness of Sin, the children of Israel complained and grumbled to Moses and Aaron about the lack of food and meat to eat, saying that they wished they had died in the land of Egypt. This murmuring took place on the 15th day. After hearing their complaints, here is what the Lord said to Moses: " 'Behold, I will rain bread from the heavens for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain amount every day, that I may **prove them, whether they will walk in My law or not**.

'And it shall come to pass **on the sixth day,** they shall prepare what they bring in. And it shall be **twice as much as they gather day by day**.' And Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, 'AT SUNSET [Hebrew *ba erev,* ending the 15th day, a weekly Sabbath], then you shall know that the LORD has brought you out from the land of Egypt. And at sunrise [Hebrew *boqer*], you shall see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your murmurings against the LORD. And what *are* we that you murmur against us?'

"And Moses said, 'You will see when the LORD shall give you flesh to eat at sunset [Hebrew *ba erev*, ending that Sabbath day], and bread to the full at sunrise, for the LORD hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. And what are we? Your murmurings *are* not against us, BUT AGAINST THE LORD' " (Ex. 16:4-8).

These verses hold a lesson for today because human nature has not changed. People still complain against God. But God is still merciful and long-suffering, even as He was to the children of Israel in the wilderness. God did not punish the people when they murmured against Him, but sent them manna from heaven to eat, and the manna continued for forty years without fail (Ex. 16:35; Joshua 5:12).

The manna was indeed a miracle! God supernaturally sent it. He provided for His people in one of the most desolate wildernesses in the world: "...And at sunrise [Hebrew *boqer*, sunrise of the next day, the first day of the week] the dew lay all around about the camp. And when the layer of dew had gone up, behold, *there was* a small round thing upon the face of the wilderness, small as the hoar-frost upon the ground. And when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said one to another, 'What *is* that?' For they did not know what it *was*. And Moses said to them, 'This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded. 'Each man gather of it according to his eating; an omer for each one, according to the number of your persons. Each one shall take for those who *are* in his tent' " (Ex. 16:13-16).

LESSONS OF THE MANNA

The miracle of the manna is a striking illustration of God's mercy. It is also a powerful lesson in the importance of resting on the seventh day, which God has appointed and sanctified as the weekly Sabbath.

Every morning for six days in a row, God sent the manna for the people to eat. On days one through five, He commanded them to gather only what they could eat each day. They were not to keep any manna until the next morning (verses 19-20). Needless to say, some disobeyed God and kept it until the next morning, and it bred worms and rotted.

On the sixth day of that week they gathered twice as much as they did on the first five days. Here are God's instructions through Moses for the sixth day, in preparation for the weekly Sabbath: " 'This *is that* which the LORD has said, 'Tomorrow is the rest of the HOLY SABBATH TO THE LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil. And that which remains over [the extra omers of manna for the Sabbath], lay up for yourselves to be kept until the *next* morning.' And they laid it up until the *next* morning as Moses said. And IT DID NOT STINK; NEITHER WAS THERE ANY WORM in it" (Ex. 16:23-24).

Here is another miracle of the manna: If the manna was kept overnight during the six working days of the week, it bred worms and rotted. But on the sixth day, they could gather twice as much and keep half of the manna for the Sabbath day, and it did not breed worms or rot (verse 24).

How plain and unmistakable! By these daily and weekly miracles of the manna, the children of Israel always knew which day was the Sabbath. Remember that the manna continued to come six days a week for forty years, but not once did it appear on the seventh day. God used the miracles of the manna to impress on His people the importance of keeping the seventh day as the weekly Sabbath.

Only twenty-two days after sending the first manna, God gave the Ten Commandments. The Fourth Commandment is the command to rest on the seventh day, the weekly Sabbath. The importance of keeping the Fourth

Commandment is magnified when we fully understand the miracles of the manna:

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter; your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your livestock, nor the stranger within your gates; for *in* six days the LORD made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it" (Ex. 20:8-11).

God created the weekly Sabbath by sanctifying the seventh day as a day of rest for all mankind. God Himself rested on the first Sabbath day, and blessed it, and set it apart as holy time from the creation of this world (Gen. 2:1-4; *see Appendix B*). The Sabbath was given to mankind in order that all might rest from their labors and seek fellowship with God. The Sabbath is not to be used for the labor of earning our daily bread! **This is the lesson of the miracles of the manna.**

Most of humanity down through the ages has not learned this lesson. The nations of this world long ago rebelled against God and rejected the seventh-day Sabbath. Many in the Christian-professing world keep the first day of the week—Sunday. In their misguided self-righteousness, they declare that Sunday is the Lord's Day. But the Lord God did not sanctify Sunday, and nowhere in Scripture is the first day of the week called holy! The Scriptures show that God sanctified **the seventh day** of the week from the beginning, and He made it unmistakably clear to His people that only the seventh day is holy.

Some claim that it makes no difference which day they keep. They have forgotten the lesson of the manna. They have rejected the holy Sabbath of God! People today wouldn't continue to reject God's holy Sabbath for long if their food would breed worms and rot, would they?

Here is Moses' message on the next seventh day, the second weekly Sabbath of Exodus 16: " '...Eat it today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD. Today you shall not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.' And it came to pass that some of the people went out on the seventh day in order to gather, but they did not find *any*" (verses 25-27).

What important lesson does this account teach us about God and the Sabbath? GOD HONORS HIS OWN SABBATH! The Lord God did not send the manna on the seventh day. It was His holy Sabbath! God was teaching the people not to break His commandments and laws. He set the example for the people by honoring His own Sabbath. He was grieved when some stubbornly attempted to gather manna on the seventh day:

"And the LORD said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse [those who went out to gather manna on the Sabbath] to keep My commandments and My laws? See, because that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you the bread of two days on the sixth day. Let each one stay in his place. Do not let any one go out of his place on the seventh day.' So the people rested on the seventh day. And the house of Israel called the name of it Manna..." (Ex. 16:28-31).

Today, people ought to ask themselves this question: "Am I grieving God by REFUSING TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS?" The lesson of the manna teaches that God will provide for us at all times when we honor the seventh day, the weekly Sabbath of God. But if we rebel and refuse to obey God, His blessings cease, and we are subject to His wrath!

The miracles of the manna—and all the events that are recorded in Exodus 16—illustrate the high value that God places on His holy Sabbath. It is imperative that we understand the events of Exodus 16 in this context. **With this understanding, we will be able to determine the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim* as used by God in His inspired Word**.

Let's go back in the account to the first Sabbath, before the manna was given. On this Sabbath—the 15th day of the month—God said that He would provide bread and meat from heaven for the people to eat. We know that God sent them manna from heaven, the next day, early in the morning at sunrise. But when did God send them meat from heaven?

*BA EREV—A Key Time in the Sequence of Even*ts

As God had set a specific time of day to send the manna, so He chose a specific time to send the people meat from heaven. That time is revealed in the message that Moses delivered to the people during their first Sabbath in the wilderness of Sin: "And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel: '**At even** [Hebrew *ba erev*, "at sunset," ending that Sabbath], then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt'....And Moses said: 'This shall be, when the LORD shall give you **in the evening** [Hebrew *ba erev*, "at sunset"] flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full....' " (Ex. 16:6-8, *JPSA*).

Notice that the JPSA has translated *ba erev* as both "at even" and "in the evening." Fox's translation conveys the precise meaning of the Hebrew text: "Moshe [Moses] and Aharon [Aaron] said to all the Children of Israel: **At sunset** [Hebrew *ba erev*] you will know that it is YHWH who brought you out of the land of Egypt....Moshe [Moses] said: Since YHWH gives you flesh to eat **at sunset** [Hebrew *ba erev*], and at daybreak, bread to satisfy (yourselves)..." (Ex. 16:6-8, *SB*). *For a technical exegesis of this passage, see Appendix H.*

"And Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At sunset, then you shall know that the LORD has brought you out from the land of Egypt. And at sunrise, you shall see the glory of the LORD, for He hears

your murmurings against the LORD. And what *are* we that you murmur against us?' And Moses said, 'You will see when the LORD shall give you flesh to eat at sunset and bread to the full at sunrise, for the LORD hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. And what are we? Your murmurings *are* not against us, but against the LORD' " (Ex. 16:6-8).

The account in Exodus 16 explicitly tells us that God promised to provide meat for the people at sunset. In Verse 13, we read that God fulfilled His promise at that exact time: "And it came to pass AT SUNSET [Hebrew *ba erev*, the sunset ending that Sabbath], that the quails came up and covered the camp..."

The Scriptural account leaves no room for arguing or debating the timing of this event. Fox's translation pinpoints the specific time of day that is designated in the Hebrew text: "**Now it was AT SUNSET** [Hebrew *ba erev*] **a horde-of-quail came up and covered the camp**..." (Ex. 16:13, *SB*).

Our study of Leviticus 23 has confirmed that the day ends "at sunset," or *ba erev*. And our study of the account in Exodus 16 has demonstrated that the 15th day of the second month was the weekly Sabbath. The reason the quail were not sent until the day had ended at sunset, or *ba erev*, is that God was teaching the people to rest on the Sabbath. God did not want the people to transgress the Sabbath day by gathering the quail. Neither did He want them doing the work involved in killing, cleaning, and roasting the quail on the Sabbath.

If God had sent the quail BEFORE sunset—BEFORE the Sabbath had ended—and had allowed the people to gather, clean and roast the quail on the Sabbath day, why would He have condemned some of the people on the next Sabbath day when they went looking for manna? That would be contradicting Himself, wouldn't it? God is not double minded nor hypocritical! With God, there is NO VARIABLENESS, neither shadow of turning (Jas. 1:17). It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18).

THE ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS IN EXODUS 16 MAKES IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT THE QUAIL DID NOT COME BEFORE THE SABBATH DAY HAD ENDED AT SUNSET, OR *BA EREV*.

And when did the people begin to eat the quail? The time of their eating is clearly recorded in the Scriptural account: "And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: 'I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak unto them, saying: AT DUSK [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, "between the two evenings"] YE SHALL EAT FLESH, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God' " (Ex. 16:11-12, *JPSA*).

The words "at dusk" are translated from the Hebrew phrase *ben ha arbayim*—the same phrase that is used in the Passover command in Exodus 12. As in Exodus 12, Fox's translation again shows the literal meaning of this phrase: "YHWH spoke to Moshe [Moses], saying: I have hearkened to the grumblings of the Children of Israel—speak to them, and say: **Between the**

setting-times [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*] **you shall eat flesh**, and at daybreak you shall be satisfied with bread, and you shall know that I am YHWH your God" (Ex. 16:11-12, *SB*).

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, "Between the two evenings you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled *with* bread. And you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God' " (Ex. 16:11-12).

The sequence of events in the miracle of the quail is the key that unlocks the Scriptural meaning of *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times." When God promised to provide meat for the children of Israel, He said that they would be able to eat the meat "at dusk," or *ben ha arbayim*. Since the children of Israel could not eat the flesh of the quail before the quail had arrived, and since God did not send the quail until the Sabbath had ended at sunset, or *ba erev*, we know that they ate the quail AFTER SUNSET. And **since God Himself said that they would eat flesh during the time known as *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times"—we know without a doubt that *ben ha arbayim* IS THE TIME PERIOD THAT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWS SUNSET**.

The Scriptural account makes it absolutely clear that the quail arrived at *ba erev*, or sunset. Then the quail covered the camp; that is, they were sent by God into the camp of Israel, not outside the camp. This event was another miracle of God. To fulfill His promise, God instantly created the quail and caused them to fall into the camp. Apparently, when the quail came, they literally fell out of the sky onto the camp grounds, and on the tents, which made gathering them a very easy task. Since the sun had set, God did not want the people to wander out into the desert looking for quail and be overtaken by the darkness of night. The miracle of the quail is another example of God's lovingkindness and mercy toward the children of Israel.

There are three key factors in the timing of this miracle:

1) The promise of the quail was given on the fifteenth day of the second month. The context reveals that this day was a weekly Sabbath.

2) God said that the people would begin to EAT the quail during *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times."

3) God did not send the quail until the Sabbath day had ended "at sunset," or *ba erev*.

These key chronological facts are clearly documented in the Scriptural account. There can be no doubt whatsoever concerning their accuracy!

The Traditional Definition of BEN HA ARBAYIM Does Not Fit the Scriptural Facts

The Scriptural record of the miracle of the quail leaves no room for placing *ben ha arbayim* before sunset. The children of Israel could not eat the quail before the quail had arrived at sunset, or *ba erev*. It would be absurd even to suggest that could happen. However, many people seem to believe that it happened. They insist on defining *ben ha arbayim* as the afternoon hours before sunset. Remember Rabbi Kaplan's translation of the account, which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "...Speak to them and say, In the AFTERNOON [translated from *ben ha arbayim*], you will eat meat....That EVENING [translated from *ba erev*] a flock of quail came and covered the camp" (Ex. 16:12-13, *The Living Torah*, emphasis added).

Rabbi Kaplan's translation is based on the traditional interpretation of *ben ha arbayim* as the time from just after noon until sunset. But it is ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE to make this Jewish definition fit the Scriptural account of the miracle of the quail. Rabbi Kaplan has attempted to make it fit by translating *ba erev* as "evening"—ignoring the fact that *ba erev* specifically refers to sunset, and implying that it includes the afternoon of the day, which he views as *ben ha arbayim*.

Rabbi Kaplan's translation of *ben ha arbayim* and *ba erev* stands in sharp opposition to the Scriptural usage of these phrases. The use of *ba erev* in Leviticus 23 and many other passages clearly demonstrates that this phrase does not refer to an extended period of time—as does the word "evening"—but to the setting of the sun at the end of the day. It is a gross distortion of Scripture to expand the meaning of *ba erev* to include the late hours of the day.

Only by acknowledging the Scriptural meaning of *ba erev*—"at sunset"—can we unlock the true meaning of *ben ha arbayim*. The use of *ba erev* in the sequence of events in Exodus 16 makes it absolutely clear that ***ben ha arbayim* does not occur in the afternoon, or between noon and sunset—IT IS IMPOSSIBLE! *BEN HA ARBAYIM*, AS DEFINED IN SCRIPTURE AND AS USED BY GOD HIMSELF, DOES NOT BEGIN UNTIL THE SUN HAS SET!**

The chronological events that are recorded in Exodus 16 clearly define *ben ha arbayim*— "between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times"—as the time period that immediately FOLLOWS sunset, or *ba erev*. *Ben ha arbayim* does not begin UNTIL THE SUN HAS SET BELOW THE HORIZON. It is the period of time that begins the new day—not the late portion of the day from noon to sunset! Any other interpretation, Jewish or otherwise, is opposing the inspired Word of God. Those who insist that *ben ha arbayim*— "between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times"—is the time period between noon and sunset are relying on the traditions of men rather than on the Word of God!

The Scriptural Definition of BEN HA ARBAYIM Affirmed by Some Scholars

Unlike Kuhn, Grabbe and Rabbi Kaplan, who hold to the unscriptural definition of the rabbis, there are some scholars who acknowledge that *ben ha arbayim* is the beginning portion of the day: "Accordingly, on the evenings of the new moon the duration of twilight from the moment of the crescent's appearance is divided into two unequal parts, which the Jews called 'the two evenings,' or in Hebrew *arbayim*. The first evening formed an interval of about half an hour, during which, as it was still sufficiently light to be considered as a continuation and part of the preceding day, the common occupations of the day could be attended to; that interval, in fact, which we call the 'twilight of the civil day.' The second evening lasted nearly an hour....In the Pentateuch we find use made several times of the expression *ben ha arbayim* ('between the two evenings') to indicate the moment which separated the two periods described above, **and marked for the Jews the beginning of the civil and religious day**" (G. Schiaparelli, *Astronomy in the Old Testament*, p. 93, emphasis added).

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* confirms that *ben ha arbayim* was originally defined as the period of time from sunset until dark: "As there were no definite measurements of the time of the day [no timing devices such as clocks], the various periods were indicated by the natural changes of the day; thus 'midday' was the time of the day when the sun mounted its highest, *cohorayim*; afternoon was that part of the day when the sun declined, *ntothhayom*; and evening was the time of the going down of the sun, erev. '**Between the evenings,' *ben ha arbayim*, was the interval between sunset and darkness**. The day was not divided into hours until a late[r] period" (s. v. "*Day and Night*," 1956 edition, p. 798, emphasis added).

In the same encyclopedia, under "Even, Evening, Eventide," the following definitions are given for *ba erev* and *ben ha arbayim*: "The words are used in slightly different meanings: (1) The time of sunset, the beginning of the Heb. day, as in Lev 15, where the directions are given for the removal of uncleanness, which took place at sunset [*ba erev*]. (2) Twilight, the time approaching darkness when the lamps [in the temple] are lighted [*ben ha arbayim*]; Ex 30:8 (lit. 'between the two evenings'); Jer 6:4 ('the shadows of the evening'). (3) The early part of night (Prov 7:9; Ezk. 12:7)" (Ibid., p. 1041). *For a technical exegesis of Jeremiah 6:4-5, see Appendix Q.*

The above reference to Leviticus 15 is a good example of the Scriptural usage of *ba erev*. In Leviticus 15, *ba erev* is used in the context of those who were ceremonially unclean, who had to wait until the day had ended before they could become clean. They could not be ceremonially cleansed in the middle of the afternoon, but had to wait until sunset, when they could bathe themselves and enter into the camp. Sunset ended the day of their defilement, and they began the new day in a state of cleanness.

The use of *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 30:8 in the context of lighting the temple lamps helps to clarify the time of day that this phrase is designating. It

is obvious that the priests did not light the lamps in the middle of the afternoon, before sunset. As the article states, the lamps were lit at "twilight, the time approaching darkness...." This definition is supported by the Scriptural usage of *ben ha arbayim* as the period of time that follows sunset.

The Scriptural definitions of *ba erev* and *ben ha arbayim* are also upheld in *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, which states the following: "*erev*, (sun)set, evening; 1. a. *evening*, origin[ally] *sunset*, and hence per[haps] *at the time of sunset*,...*in the evening* Gn. 19:1, 29:23, Ex. 12:18, Dt. 16:4....as marking duration of impurity...as Day of Atonement, *ba erev*. *Ben ha arbayim*, *between the two evenings*...between sunset and dark."

These authoritative works by reputable scholars affirm that *ben ha arbayim*— "between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times"—as defined in Scripture, is the time period between sunset and dark.

How Long Is BEN HA ARBAYIM?

We have examined the Scriptural evidence, and we have found irrefutable proof that *ben ha arbayim*— "between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times"—begins immediately after the day has ended at sunset, or *ba erev*. *Ben ha arbayim* is the period of time that begins the new day. That is the time God appointed for the Passover lambs to be slain, and that is the time God chose to send the quail to the camp of Israel.

The account of the miracle of the quail reveals that the children of Israel began to eat the flesh of the quail during *ben ha arbayim*. However, before they could eat the meat, they had to clean and roast the quail. These facts have led to questions concerning the actual length of time that is included in *ben ha arbayim*.

Ben ha arbayim is a relatively short period in the day. It begins when the sun disappears below the horizon and ends when the darkness of night has come. The length of time varies depending on the season of the year. In the winter, *ben ha arbayim* is approximately 30-40 minutes. In the spring or fall, *ben ha arbayim* lasts from approximately one hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes. In the middle of the summer, *ben ha arbayim* can last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. Other factors, such as cloud covering or phases of the moon, can either hasten or delay the coming of darkness, thus shortening or lengthening the time usually allotted to *ben ha arbayim*.

In the spring, which is the season for keeping the Passover, *ben ha arbayim* is generally one hour. However, in the time of the full moon, the period of light is longer because the moon is rising as the sun is setting. Since the events in both Exodus 12 and Exodus 16 took place in the middle of the month, when the moon was full, it is possible that *ben ha arbayim* was considerably longer, lasting up to 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The exact length of time of *ba erev* and *ben ha arbayim* can be verified by personal observation from an unobstructed viewpoint. During a visit to San Antonio, Texas, during the first week in June 1996, the author was able to observe the time of *ba erev* and the entire duration of *ben ha arbayim* from a restaurant atop the 500-foot San Antonio Tower, which had a 360-degree view, making a perfect observation platform. The author observed the time of *ba erev*, or sunset, from the point when the sun appeared to touch the horizon until it dropped below the horizon. The exact duration of its setting was 2 minutes and 48 seconds. When it was fully set, the author began to time the length of *ben ha arbayim*. The total time of this period of twilight was 1 hour and 8 minutes. The author's observation verifies that the length of *ben ha arbayim* may vary from approximately one hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Exodus 16 tells us that God sent the quail as soon as the sun had set. Since *ben ha arbayim* was approximately one and a half hours long, there would have been plenty of time to catch, kill, clean and roast the flesh. Because quail are small birds, it would take only a short period of time to roast them over campfires. It is possible that the first flesh was ready to eat only thirty minutes after being caught. As God had said, "...BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, between sunset and dark] YOU SHALL EAT FLESH" (Ex. 16:12).

Some reject the Scriptural definition of *ben ha arbayim* and insist that it would have required a much longer period of time for the children of Israel to eat the quail. They claim that it was impossible for such a large flock of quail to be eaten between sunset and dark. But the Scriptures do not state that the quail were consumed entirely during *ben ha arbayim*. The account simply records God's promise that the people would be eating the quail during this time.

Other arguments are presented to support the claim that *ben ha arbayim* extends through the night, or even through the day. Some interpret the term *ben ha arbayim* as "between the two sunsets." They base their interpretation on Numbers 9:11, which they view as a command that the Passover lambs not only be slain but also be eaten during *ben ha arbayim*. *See Appendix J and Appendix K for a technical exegesis of the Passover commands in Numbers 9:11.*

That is not what God commanded in Exodus 12. The commands in Exodus 12 for observing the Passover required only that the lambs be slain during *ben ha arbayim*. Although the Passover lambs were slain at this time, they could not be eaten during *ben ha arbayim* because it takes several hours to roast a young lamb up to a year old.

Everett Fox, a noted authority in Biblical Hebrew, holds firmly to the definition of *ben ha arbayim* as the time between sunset and darkness. Here is Fox's translation of God's command in Leviticus 23:5 concerning the Passover: "On the first New-Moon, on the fourteenth after the New-Moon, **between the setting-times** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*] (is) Passover to YHWH" (*SB*).

The Schocken Bible offers the following footnote to clarify this verse: "**Between the setting-times: Between the time that the sun is below the horizon, no longer visible, and total darkness**. An idiomatic rendition would be 'at twilight' " (page 618, emphasis added).

In translating *ben ha arbayim* as "between the setting-times," Fox specifies that this expression refers to the twilight of the day. His precise translation and additional clarification of the phrase *ben ha arbayim* show that he fully understands the Scriptural meaning of this term. There is not one shred of evidence that *ben ha arbayim* is used in the Scriptures to designate any other time than twilight, which begins when the sun has set.

Various Translations of the Hebrew Terms

In reading different translations of the Bible, it is understandable why so much confusion has existed over the meaning of *ben ha arbayim* and its relationship to *ba erev*. In the *King James Version*, both Hebrew phrases are similarly translated "at even" or "in the evening." The only distinction made between the two terms is that *ben ha arbayim* is footnoted with a marginal reading of "between the two evenings."

The *Revised Standard Version* translates *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 12:6 as "evening" and in Exodus 16:12 as "twilight." Whenever *ben ha arbayim* is translated "in the evening," it is footnoted "between the two evenings." *Ba erev* is consistently translated as "evening."

Moffat's translation of *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 12:6 and Exodus 16:12 is "between sunset and dark." In most other occurrences, he translates it "evening." *Ba erev* is translated "sunset" or "evening."

The *New English Bible* translates the term *ben ha arbayim* as "between sunset and dark" in Exodus 12:6 and Exodus 16:12. In all other occurrences, it is rendered the same. The term *ba erev* is consistently translated "at evening" or "evening."

The Jewish Publication Society of America, in *The Holy Scriptures* according to the Masoretic Text, translates *ben ha arbayim* consistently as "dusk," and *ba erev* as "evening" or "at even."

The new edition by the Jewish Publication Society, *TANAKH—The Holy Scriptures*, translates *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 12:6, Leviticus 23:5 and Numbers 9:5 as "at twilight," and in Exodus 16:12 as "by evening."

The *Jerusalem Bible*, in the English text by Harold Fisch, translates *ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 12:6 and Leviticus 23:5 as "towards evening," which is the same as the Rashi and Migil linear translations. In Exodus 16:12, it is translated "at evening." Migil adds the footnote "between the two evenings," but Rashi does not.

The *New American Standard Bible* translates *ben ha arbayim* in

Exodus 12:6, Exodus 16:12, Leviticus 23:5 and Numbers 9:5 as "at twilight." *Ba erev* is consistently translated as "evening."

The Scriptures plainly teach that *ben ha arbayim* is the time period between sunset and dark. It begins when the day has ended at sunset, or *ba erev*. That is the time specifically chosen by God for the killing of the Passover lambs. At the Passover in Egypt, the lambs were slain immediately after sunset ending the 13th day of the first month—at the beginning of the 14th day, not in the afternoon of the 14th.

What Does Numbers 28 Tell Us?

Despite the plain statements of Scripture, there are some who interpret Numbers 28:16 as showing that the Passover was observed at the end of the 14th, rather than at the beginning of the 14th. Let's examine Numbers 28:16 to see if there is any basis for their claim:

"And in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, is the LORD's Passover" (*JPSA*).

This verse simply states that the Passover is on the 14th day of the month. The verse says nothing whatsoever about the specific time of day. If we assume that the Passover should be kept at the end of the 14th, then the same premise must be applied to the next verse, which contains identical Hebrew and English wording, with the exception of the number of the day:

"And on the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast..." (verse 17).

If "on the fourteenth day" means at the end of the 14th, then by the same logic, "on the fifteenth day" must also refer to the end of the 15th. This line of reasoning would delay the Feast of Unleavened Bread until the beginning of the 16th day of the first month. It is not difficult to see the error in this interpretation. The Scriptures clearly teach that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th day of the first month—not on the 16th.

Why do rabbis and some Christian-professing scholars insist that God's command to keep the Passover "on the fourteenth day" means at the end of the 14th? Why do they cling to this faulty interpretation of Scripture? The answer is obvious: THEY ARE NOT SEEKING THE TRUE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD! Rather, they are relying on the traditional afternoon sacrifice of the Passover at the temple, which began approximately 800 years after the Passover in Egypt.

A detailed study of Israel's first Passover as recorded in Exodus 12 will show that there is no Scriptural justification for a late afternoon Passover observance. We will undertake a verse-by-verse study of Exodus 12 in the following chapter.

Ben Ha Arbayim

"Between the two evenings:
"Between the setting-times"
"Between the time that the sun is below the horizon,
no longer visible, and total darkness."
Duration approximately 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes
(see page 50)

CHAPTER SIX

ISRAEL'S FIRST PASSOVER

Now that we understand the Scriptural meaning of *ben ha arbayim*, we are ready to study the observance of the Passover by the children of Israel in Egypt. Exodus 12 gives us a detailed account of Israel's first Passover, complete with God's step-by-step instructions through Moses. The Scriptural record lays bare for us the true chronology of the Passover day, and the beginning of the Exodus on the following day, the fifteenth day of the first month.

The Scriptural account of the Passover and the Exodus has been so misinterpreted and so mistaught that the true teachings of God's Word are difficult for many readers and Bible students to understand. In order to eliminate the confusion that has arisen over the chronology of the Passover, we will study each vital element in the Passover observance and will thoroughly examine all factors as recorded in the Scriptures. As we proceed, we will let the Word of God guide us into the truth concerning the Passover. We will study and analyze the elements of the Passover day one by one, sorting the true facts of Scripture from the false claims of men. As we will see, truth agrees with Scripture. Error does not agree with Scripture.

So that we can clearly understand how the commands of God were fulfilled by the children of Israel on the Passover day, we will thoroughly examine the following elements:

Element # 1) When were the Passover lambs killed?
Element # 2) Where were the lambs killed?
Element # 3) Where were the children of Israel located during the entire Passover?
Element # 4) How long did it take to kill, roast and eat the lambs, and to burn the bones and remains?
Element # 5) When did the children of Israel leave their houses?
Element # 6) What does "night" (Hebrew *lailah*) mean? What does "morning" (Hebrew *boqer*) mean?
Element # 7) When did the children of Israel spoil the Egyptians?
Element # 8) When and where did the Exodus begin?

These elements have been much disputed and debated in the continuing controversy over a 14th or 15th Passover observance. It is important that we come to a correct understanding of each element of the Passover as commanded by God and observed by the children of Israel. The records that God has preserved in Exodus 12 will lead us to a true understanding of these elements. As we study each Passover element, we will apply what we have already learned and let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. In so doing, we will come to a correct understanding of God's commands for the Passover, and we will learn how and when these commands were carried out by the children of Israel.

Element # 1) When were the Lambs Killed?

When did the children of Israel kill the Passover lambs—at the beginning of the fourteenth day, or at the end? This question is the heart and core of the 14th/15th Passover debate. Before we answer this question, let's look at God's instructions in Exodus 12 concerning the time of year for observing the Passover:

"And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month *shall be* to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you' " (Ex. 12:1-2). This month was named Abib, which means "green ears," referring to the spring barley harvest. Later this month was called Nisan.

Next, God gave His instructions for selecting and killing the Passover lambs: "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them each man a lamb for a father's house, a lamb for a house. And if the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take according to the number of the souls, each one, according to the eating of his mouth, you shall count concerning the lamb.

"Your lamb shall be without blemish [without defect—a type of Christ as our Passover Lamb (John 1:29, I Cor. 5:7)], a male of the first year. You shall take *it* from the sheep or from the goats" (verses 3-5).

Next, God told them when to kill the Passover lambs. Notice carefully what God commanded: "And you shall keep it [the lamb] up until [Hebrew *ad*,] **the beginning of the fourteenth day** of the same month. And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it **between the two evenings** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]" (verse 6).

Here is Fox's translation of God's command: "It [the Passover lamb] shall be for you in safekeeping, **until** [Hebrew *ad*] **the fourteenth day** after this New-Moon, and **they are to slay it—the entire assembly of the community of Israel—between the setting-times** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]" (Ex 12:6, *SB*).

They were to keep the lambs "**unto**" or "**until**" the fourteenth day of the first month. The words "unto" and "until" are translated from the Hebrew preposition *ad*. *Ad* is used to express "...the limit of time itself" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*). This Hebrew preposition limits the time for slaying the lambs to **a specific point**, and does not allow movement through and beyond that point. The use of the preposition *ad* in God's command makes it clear that the lambs were to be kept only to **the point in time at which the fourteenth began—not beyond that point**.

The commanded time for killing the lambs is "at dusk" or "between the setting-times," as correctly translated from the Hebrew phrase *ben ha*

arbayim. As we learned in the previous chapter of our study, *ben ha arbayim* is the time period that begins when the sun has set. *Ben ha arbayim* in Exodus 12:6 is the time between sunset and dark at the BEGINNING of the fourteenth day.

That this is the commanded time for slaying the lambs is further confirmed by the Scriptural definition of a day. As we saw in our study of Leviticus 23:32, the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the month, begins "in the ninth day of the month at sunset." Applying this principle to the Passover, the fourteenth day of the first month would be defined as beginning "in the thirteenth day of the month at sunset." *For a technical exegesis of the command in Leviticus 23:32, see Appendix I.*

According to Scripture, keeping the lambs "**until** the fourteenth" means keeping them through the thirteenth day of the month until "even," or sunset, which ends the thirteenth and begins the fourteenth. Killing the lambs "between the two evenings," or *ben ha arbayim*, means killing the lambs IMMEDIATELY **AFTER the thirteenth day of the month has ended at sunset**. That is the true meaning of God's command for slaying the lambs, as interpreted by the Scriptures.

The killing of the Passover lambs took place AT THE BEGINNING of the fourteenth day. As the thirteenth day of the month drew to a close, all the children of Israel assembled their families and gathered around the lambs, watching the sun set and waiting for the sun to disappear below the horizon. The instant it dropped below the horizon, ending the thirteenth and beginning *ben ha arbayim* of the fourteenth, all the children of Israel killed the Passover lambs at precisely the same time! What a fantastic occurrence!

As God had commanded, "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]" (Ex. 12:6).

The Answer for Element # 1: The Passover lambs were killed at the beginning of the fourteenth day of the first month, immediately after sunset of the thirteenth.

Element # 2) Where were the Lambs Killed?

God's commands for the Passover reveal that the children of Israel were assembled by households at their individual dwellings when the lambs were slain. In Exodus 12:4 we read, "And if the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take ...one..."

Fox's translation confirms the location of the children of Israel at the time for killing the lambs: "Now if there be too few in the house for a lamb, he is to take (it), he and his neighbor who is near his house..." (Ex. 12:4, *SB*).

After slaying the lambs, the children of Israel splashed some of the blood on the door frames of their houses, as God had commanded: "And

they shall take of the blood and strike *it* on the two side posts and upon the upper door post of the houses *in* which they shall eat it" (Ex. 12:7).

This verse shows very plainly that the lambs not only were slain but also were eaten at the houses of the children of Israel. *The Schocken Bible* confirms that the lambs were eaten in individual houses: "They are to take some of the blood and put it onto the two posts and onto the lintel, onto the houses in which they eat it" (Ex. 12:7).

The Scriptural account of the Passover makes it explicitly clear that the lambs were slain and eaten at the separate dwellings of the children of Israel. Remember, at this time in Israel's history there was no tabernacle and no temple. The children of Israel did not assemble at a central location to keep the Passover. They assembled by families in their own houses, or in a neighbor's house. That is where the children of Israel were assembled when they killed the Passover lambs and ate the Passover meal.

The Answer for Element # 2: The lambs were killed at the houses of the children of Israel.

Element # 3) Where were the Children of Israel During the Entire Passover Observatiom?

In Exodus 12:21-28, we find Moses communicating God's commands for the Passover to the elders of Israel, who in turn gave God's instructions to the children of Israel. This procedure was necessary because the children of Israel were dwelling throughout the land of Goshen, which was located in the northeastern section of the Nile Delta:

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Draw out and take a lamb for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover *lamb*. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood *that is* in the bowl, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood in the bowl. And **none of you shall go out of the door of his house until sunrise**' " (Ex. 12:21-22).

The Hebrew word that is translated "morning" in the JPSA version is *boqer*. Fox's translation shows the precise meaning of this Hebrew word: "Now you—**you are not to go out, any man from the entrance to his house, UNTIL DAYBREAK** [Hebrew *boqer*]" (Ex. 12:22, *SB*).

God clearly commanded the children of Israel NOT to leave their houses until daybreak, or sunrise. During the entire Passover night, they were to remain under the protection of the blood of the lambs, which they had put on the door frames of their houses: "For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians. And when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will PASS OVER the door, and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. And you shall observe this thing as a law to you and to your children forever" (verses 23-24).

These words of God established the Passover as a lasting ordinance for the children of Israel. It was to be observed by their descendants throughout all generations as a memorial of God's "passing over" their houses and sparing their firstborn in Egypt. As we learned previously, this is how the observance derived the name PASSOVER. Just as the LORD had said, He PASSED OVER them:

" 'And it shall be when you have come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He has promised that you shall keep this service. And it will be, when your children shall say to you, "What *does* this service *mean* to you?" Then you shall say, "It *is* the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, Who PASSED OVER the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses." ' And the people bowed their heads and worshiped [showing reverence for the commandments of the Lord, which they had received from the elders].

"And the children of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; SO DID THEY" (verses 25-28).

Verse 28 clearly states that the children of Israel obeyed all the commands and instructions that God had delivered to them through Moses. This point must be emphasized because some claim that the children of Israel did not observe the Passover according to the instructions that are recorded in the Scriptures. Exodus 12:28 shows that such claims are absolutely false.

The account in Exodus 12 states that Moses gave God's instructions to the elders, who in turn gave them to the children of Israel, who obediently carried them out. Since these instructions were received at the beginning of the first month, the children of Israel had several days of advance notice before the selection of the lambs on the tenth day of the month. When the time came to observe the Passover, the children of Israel knew exactly what to do, and they did all that God had commanded.

After selecting the lambs on the tenth day, they kept them until the end of the thirteenth day. When the sun began to set, they were assembled with their families at houses throughout the land of Goshen. As soon as the sun had set, beginning the fourteenth day, all the households killed the Passover lambs simultaneously. After killing the lambs "between the two evenings," or *ben ha arbayim*, they took some of the blood and put it on the door frames of the houses. Then they prepared and ate the Passover meal.

The account in Exodus 12 makes it explicitly clear that the children of Israel were in their houses when they ate the Passover. The verses that we have already studied use the word "houses" four times (verses 7 and 23, and twice in verse 27) and the word "house" once (verse 22). A complete analysis of Exodus 12 reveals that the Hebrew word *bayith*, meaning "house" or "houses," has been used a total of sixteen times—one time to denote a household, one time in reference to the houses of the Egyptians, one time in reference to a dungeon ("house of the pit"), and thirteen times in reference to the houses of the children of Israel. There is no question that the children of Israel were in their houses when they observed the Passover.

In spite of the overwhelming Scriptural evidence that they were in their houses at the time of the Passover, some believe that the children of Israel left their houses in the land of Goshen before the Passover. One of the major arguments for a 15th Passover is based on the premise that the children of Israel left their homes and assembled in tents at Rameses before keeping the Passover. This view of the Passover originated in Judaism. According to this traditional belief, the children of Israel left Egypt shortly after midnight on the night of the 15th, after eating the Passover earlier that same night. This interpretation of Exodus 12 squeezes the events of two separate days into a single day. Although this traditional belief conflicts with the Scriptural account of the Passover and the Exodus, it has gained many supporters over the years.

The Jewish historian Josephus was a staunch supporter of the traditional belief in a Passover at Rameses. This was the Pharisaical view, and Josephus was a Pharisee. As a loyal Pharisee, he promulgated all the Pharisaical teachings and practices. That was the very reason for his writings, as he states in the preface of his works. His histories were designed to defend those Jews of his day who had adopted the beliefs and practices of Pharisaic Judaism. One of the most venerated practices of the Pharisaic Jews was the observance of a 15th Passover.

While Josephus' works are excellent sources of historical information, we should always be mindful and aware that Josephus' writings are NOT Scripture! Josephus was a historical revisionist, portraying only the Pharisaic version of history. He presents the facts from this biased point of view; he does not present all the facts of history. He wholly ignores, as if they had never occurred, the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; the trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus; the impact of the apostles and the growth of the Christian Church. He never once mentions the Christian prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He never once writes about the apostle Paul. Because his approach is so flagrantly biased, we must examine his statements carefully.

Here is Josephus' narration of the Passover in Egypt, which, contrary to Scripture, indicates that the children of Israel left their houses prior to the Passover: "Accordingly, he [Moses] having got the Hebrews ready for their departure, and having sorted the people into tribes, he kept them together in one place; but when the fourteenth day was come, and all were ready to depart, they offered the sacrifice, and purified their houses with the blood, using bunches of hyssop for that purpose; and when they had supped, they burnt the remainder of the flesh, as just ready to depart" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. II, Ch. XIV, Sec. 6).

When we analyze Josephus' narration, we find that his statements are contradictory. He tells us that the children of Israel left their houses and gathered at one place before keeping the Passover. At the same time, he states that they purified their houses when they kept the Passover. He does not explain HOW it was possible to purify their houses after they had left their houses.

If the children of Israel had gathered at one place before the Passover, as Josephus pictures, they would not have been in their houses but would have been camping in tents. And if they were in tents, how could they purify their houses with the blood of the lambs? Did they run back to their houses with bowls of blood and sprinkle the blood on the two sideposts and lintel, and then frantically return to their tents in Rameses? This ridiculous scenario shows the gross internal contradiction in Josephus' account.

When we compare Josephus' narration with the commands in Exodus 12, we find even more contradictions. If the children of Israel had gathered at one place before the Passover, they would have left their houses before eating the Passover. And if they had left their houses before eating the Passover, they would have been violating God's express command that they eat the Passover in their houses and remain in their houses until morning (Ex. 12:7, 22).

Consider the consequences that would have befallen the children of Israel if they had been in tents at Rameses before the LORD came to kill the firstborn at midnight. If the blood was on their houses and all the firstborn were in tents in Rameses, how could the blood protect them? Following this fallacious reasoning to its ultimate end, if the children of Israel were gathered at Rameses when they kept the Passover, their firstborn were not under the protection of the blood, and therefore their firstborn died in the plague. Hence, there was no real Passover, since the Lord did not pass over them and spare the firstborn of Israel.

WHAT FOLLY! What foolishness to accept a traditional belief that directly conflicts with the truth of God's Word, and to use interpretations of Scripture that promote the false ideas of men! No wonder God says that He entraps the intelligent in the foolishness of their own human wisdom.

Their human intellect has led some scholars to completely ignore the major contradictions between the traditional teachings of a 15th Passover and the events that are recorded in Exodus 12. These scholars claim that a Passover at Rameses on the night of the 15th is supported by the Scriptural account. They state, "If this were all the information we had, we would conclude that Israel left Egypt on the same night as the Passover. Despite the logistics of getting such a huge group underway this could have been done since they were already prepared and already knew when the death angel would pass about midnight. They would have been already on the move long before sunup. (The implication is that they were all gathered into the city of Rameses and kept the Passover together there, since they began their journey from there.)" (Robert L. Kuhn and Lester L. Grabbe, *The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 8.)

These scholars have admittedly based their view of the Passover on an "implication" which they have incorrectly surmised from the Scriptural account. Doctrine as critical as the observance of the Passover should not be based on an implication that is only perceived in the mind of a scholar.

Such conclusions have no valid Scriptural basis, but are merely the result of faulty human reasoning or careless assumptions. True doctrine must be based on Scriptural facts, not on hypothetical conclusions put forth by scholars who are seeking to justify a 15th Passover.

We can be thankful for God's Word, which reveals the truth concerning the Passover. By rightly dividing the Word of God as led by His Holy Spirit, we can expose the foolishness of false doctrines and understand the truth of God. When men try to impose their own beliefs on us, we can have confidence in God's Word, knowing that the Scriptures will expose such attempts and guide us into the entire truth of God.

The Scriptural account does not show the children of Israel gathering at Rameses before the Passover. According to Scripture, the children of Israel kept the Passover at their own houses or at a neighbor's house next to theirs. They did not leave their customary dwelling places until the morning after the Passover. The assertion that the Passover was kept at Rameses does not fit the record of events in Exodus 12. This erroneous belief, which was adopted from Judaic tradition, directly conflicts with the clear statements of Scripture. Remember, truth agrees with Scripture; error does not agree with Scripture.

The children of Israel kept the Passover in their houses, just as the Bible records for us, Josephus and modern scholars notwithstanding! The inspired record in Exodus 12 makes it clear that the children of Israel were not dwelling in tents at Rameses when they kept the Passover. The Hebrew word *bayith*, which is translated "house" or "houses" in Exodus 12, does not refer to a tent or a temporary dwelling. *Bayith*, which means "a dwelling, an abode, a house," is used a total of sixteen times in Exodus 12. The Hebrew word *ohel*, which refers to "a movable, portable tent or dwelling," is not found even once in Exodus 12. The only word for a tent or temporary dwelling that is used in Exodus 12 is the Hebrew word *soo-kaw*, which is used in Verse 37 in reference to the place of booths, called "Succoth," where the children of Israel camped for the first time after beginning the Exodus (*Wigram Englishman's Hebrew-Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*). That is the only time that a Hebrew word for a tent or temporary dwelling is used in Exodus 12, and it was AFTER the Passover.

In Exodus 12:30, we find the word *bayith* used in reference to the Egyptians' houses: "...There was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house [Hebrew *bayith*] where there was not one dead." It would be ridiculous to claim that the Egyptians were living in tents, wouldn't it? Since the same Hebrew word is used in reference to the houses of the children of Israel, we can conclude that both the children of Israel and the Egyptians were in their respective houses on the night of the Passover.

The Scriptural record shows that after the children of Israel left Egypt, they did live in tents in the wilderness. In Exodus 16:16, the people were commanded to, "...take it [the manna], every man for them that are in his tent [Hebrew *ohel*]." If the children of Israel had been dwelling in tents

at Rameses during the Passover, we would find the Hebrew word *ohel* used in Exodus 12, just as it is used in Exodus 16:16 in reference to portable tents. But we find only the Hebrew word *bayith* used in Exodus 12, leaving no doubt whatsoever that the children of Israel kept the Passover in their own houses.

The Bible shows that the houses of the children of Israel were located in that part of Egypt which was called the land of Goshen. The children of Israel had come into Egypt when Israel's favorite son Joseph was ruler of Egypt under the Pharaoh. At that time, Pharaoh gave the land of Goshen to Israel and his sons and their families:

"And Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Make your father and brothers to live in the best of the land; in the land of Goshen let them live' " (Gen. 47:5-6).

That is where the children of Israel lived for over two hundred years until the Exodus. The land of Goshen comprised an area of approximately 300 square miles, an estimated 20 miles by 15 miles in length and width. The city of Rameses was located in the lower center of the land of Goshen. It was the treasure city of Egypt, built by the slave labor of the children of Israel (*Atlas of the Bible Lands*, C. S. Hammond, 1969). The villages of the children of Israel were generally grouped in clusters so that pasture land could be used for grazing the animals.

In the account of the plagues that God brought upon Egypt before the Exodus, we find many references to the houses of the Egyptians, but no mention of the houses of the children of Israel until the plague of flies. At this critical point, the Lord gave special protection to the children of Israel:

"And the LORD said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh. Lo, he comes forth to the water. And say to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Let My people go, so that they may serve Me....behold, I will send swarms *of flies* on you, and on your servants, and on your people, and into your **house**. And the **houses of the Egyptians** shall be full of swarms *of flies*, and also the ground on which they *are*.

"And in that day I will cut off **the land of Goshen**, in which My people live, so that no swarms *of flies* shall be there, so that you may know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a dividing line between My people and your people...' " (Ex. 8:20-23).

The Lord continued His protection of the children of Israel and their cattle in the plague of the grievous murrain: "And the LORD shall separate between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. And there shall nothing die of all *that belongs* to the children of Israel" (Ex. 9:4).

The land of Goshen was afterwards protected from the plague of hail: "Only in the land of Goshen, **where the children of Israel *were***, was there no hail" (verse 26).

Here are irrefutable, precise statements of Scripture showing that the children of Israel were dwelling in their houses in the land of Goshen during the plagues that God sent upon Egypt. These plagues occurred during the weeks and days that led up to the Passover. The Scriptural account makes it clear that the children of Israel HAD NOT MOVED to another location, such as Rameses, prior to the Passover!

The magnitude of these plagues demonstrates the wondrous protection that the Lord afforded to Israel. As we read in Exodus 9:26, "Only **in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were**, was there no hail."

In describing the next plague, the dreadful plague of locusts, the Lord warned Pharaoh, "...Behold, tomorrow I will bring the locusts into your country. And they shall cover the face of the ground so that one cannot be able to see the earth. And they shall eat the rest of that which has escaped, which remains to you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field. And they shall fill your **houses**, and **the houses** of all your servants, and **the houses of all the Egyptians,** which neither your fathers, nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day they were upon the earth until this day" (Ex. 10:4-6).

This plague was so devastating that "...there did not remain any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt" (verse 15).

During the plague of darkness, just before the final plague of the death of the Egyptian firstborn, we find the children of Israel still dwelling in their houses: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand toward the heavens, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, so that one may even feel the darkness.' And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven. And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did any rise from his place...**but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings** [Hebrew *moshab*, dwelling places, not tents]" (Ex. 10:21-23).

The Scriptures clearly show that the children of Israel remained in their houses during the entire time leading up to the Passover and the final plague upon the firstborn of Egypt. There is NO INDICATION—NOT EVEN A HINT—of a mass movement to Rameses during any of the plagues that preceded the Passover. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE ANYWHERE IN THE SCRIPTURAL ACCOUNT OF SUCH AN ASSEMBLING PRIOR TO THE PASSOVER. In fact, the commands that God gave to the children of Israel ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED them from gathering until the morning AFTER they ate the Passover.

These two key verses must be kept in mind: "...And **none of you shall go out of the door of his house UNTIL SUNRISE....And the children of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did**" (Ex. 12:22, 28).

The Schocken Bible conveys the directness of the command even more emphatically and pinpoints the exact time that they were permitted to leave their houses: "...**Now you—you are NOT to go out, any man from the entrance to his house, UNTIL DAYBREAK**" (Ex. 12:22, *SB*).

When we consider the magnitude of the plagues that God sent upon Egypt, and the impact that this awesome display of power had on the people, then we will begin to comprehend the deep reverence that moved the children of Israel to obediently follow God's instructions in every detail:

"...And the people bowed their heads and worshiped....And the children of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded..." (verses 27 -28).

We can be sure that the children of Israel understood that if they did not obey all the instructions of the Lord, they would not remain under His protection! They were witnessing the complete destruction of the most powerful nation on earth at that time, which had long held them in slavery; and they were witnessing the deliverance of the God of their fathers, Who was releasing them from their slavery, bringing them out of Egypt forever, and bestowing on them an abundance of riches from the vast wealth of Egypt.

The catastrophic forces that God unleashed before the Passover and the Exodus brought the greatest destruction to the world since the Flood of Noah! In a few short weeks, Egypt was reduced from the dominant world power, the center of culture and civilization of that time, to the least among the nations. So devastating was the destruction wrought by God that Egypt did not recover for nearly four hundred years!

The death of the firstborn was the final blow to the Egyptians and Pharaoh before the Exodus of the children of Israel. In sending this final plague, God was executing His judgment against the demonic/satanic worship of the Egyptians. The Lord killed all the firstborn of Egypt as He passed through the land at midnight on the fourteenth day of the first month, the Passover day. During that entire night, the children of Israel remained in their houses under the protection of the blood of the Passover lambs.

The Answer for Element # 3: The children of Israel were in their houses in the land of Goshen during the entire Passover night.

Element # 4) How Long Did it Take to Kill, Roast and Eat the Lambs, and to Burn the Bones and Remains?

As we learned in our study of the Passover commands in Exodus 12, the lambs were to be slain at *ben ha arbayim*— "between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times." Using the Scriptural definition of *ben ha arbayim* that is revealed in Exodus 16, we know that the Passover lambs were slain at the beginning of the fourteenth day of the first month, immediately after sunset of the thirteenth day.

Let's review God's commands in Exodus 12: "...And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]. And they shall take of the blood and strike *it* on the two side posts and upon the upper door posts of the houses *in* which they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in **that night** [Hebrew *lailah*], roasted with fire, and unleavened *bread.* They shall eat it with *bitter* herbs. Do not eat of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted *with* fire; its head with its legs, and with its inwards parts [the edible internal organs]. And you shall not let any of it remain until the **morning** [Hebrew *boqer*]. And that which remains of it until the **morning** [Hebrew *boqer*] you shall burn with fire" (Ex. 12:6-10).

The Schocken Bible states these commands even more clearly: "...And they are to slay it—the entire assembly of the community of Israel—between the setting-times [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*]. They are to take some of the blood and put it onto the two posts and onto the lintel, onto the houses in which they eat it. They are to eat the flesh on **that night** [Hebrew *lailah*], roasted in fire, and *matzot* [unleavened bread], with bitter-herbs they are to eat it. Do not eat any of it raw, or boiled, boiled in water, but rather roasted in fire, its head along with its legs, along with its innards. You are not to leave any of it until **morning** [Hebrew *boqer*]; what is left of it until **morning** [Hebrew *boqer*], with fire you are to burn" (Ex. 12:6-10, *SB*).

Few of us today have any real conception of the time and effort involved in fulfilling God's instructions. It is no small task to kill, skin, and gut a lamb or kid of the first year. It is important to keep this in mind so that we can have a realistic approach and true understanding of the events that took place during the Passover in Egypt. The following information has been provided by Carl Franklin, who has had considerable experience in raising kid goats for slaughter. The estimation of the time required for killing the animals, roasting the flesh, and burning the remains is based on the actual performance of these tasks. This estimation has been confirmed by Gordon G. Emerson, who has raised sheep for meat for more than thirty years.

Since the lambs or kids selected for the Passover were to be less than a year old, most were from that year's lambing, which would have taken place about two or three months before the Passover. The average lamb or kid of this age would weigh about 20 to 30 pounds after removing the skin and guts. (There would naturally be some variation in the size of the lambs, some being a little larger and some a little smaller.) To kill and bleed the animals would require about 10-15 minutes. Immediately after killing the lambs, some of the blood had to be caught in a basin and then be splashed on the two side-posts and lintel.

To skin and gut the lambs would require an additional 10-15 minutes. The guts and skins had to be put into containers to be burned with the fat and bones and any other remains from the meal. The internal edible parts—the heart, liver, and kidneys—were then placed in the chest cavity of the animal, and the entire animal was put on a roasting skewer (a long pole of some kind). Remember, God had instructed them not to break a single bone of the lamb. It was to be roasted whole with its head and legs still

attached. The final preparation for roasting would require 10-15 minutes, making a total of 30-45 minutes from the time that the animal was slain.

The lamb was then roasted with bitter herbs. It was not placed in a kettle of water or roasted in a pan where the juices might boil some of the meat, because God had forbidden any boiling of the lamb. The fire had to be kindled well in advance in order to be hot enough to roast the lamb, and additional wood had to be added periodically to keep the fire burning sufficiently during the time needed to roast the meat. Moreover, sufficient wood had to be stockpiled to burn the entire remains of skin, intestines, fat and bones when the meal was completed.

To roast a whole lamb or kid weighing 20-30 pounds until the meat was thoroughly done would take approximately 4-5 hours. The total time needed to have the meal ready is estimated to be from 4 and 1/2 hours at the earliest, to 5 and 3/4 hours at the latest, which includes 30-45 minutes to prepare the lamb and 4-5 hours to roast it.

Since the Passover was observed in the spring of the year, when the length of days and nights is almost equal, it is probable that sunset, or *ba erev*, occurred at about 6 PM. That is when *ben ha arbayim* of the fourteenth day would have begun. Thus, if the time for killing the lambs was approximately 6 PM, then the lambs were ready to be eaten just before midnight. Midnight is the very time that the Lord passed through the land of Egypt, killing the firstborn in every house that had no blood on its lintel and sideposts. No wonder God said that the people would eat the Passover meal "in trepidation," as Everett Fox correctly translates Exodus 12:11.

As translated in the *KJV* and the *JPSA* versions, this verse states that they were to eat the Passover meal "in haste," which gives the impression that they would leave immediately after they had finished eating. This obviously cannot be the meaning of God's words, since it would contradict His command in Verse 22 to remain in their houses until morning, or daybreak. A careful examination of Exodus 12:11 will establish its true meaning. Here is the verse as it appears in the *JPSA*: "And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste [Hebrew *b' ghihpha-zohn*]—it is the LORD's passover" (Ex. 12:11).

The words "in haste" are translated from the Hebrew preposition *b* and the Hebrew noun *ghihphazohn*. This Hebrew noun may be used to express either "trepidation" or "hurried flight" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*). Obviously, the children of Israel did not eat the Passover meal "in hurried flight"—they were not fleeing as they were eating. The Scriptures clearly state that they ate the entire meal in their houses. They did, however, eat the Passover meal "in trepidation."

As used in Exodus 12:11, the Hebrew word *ghihphazohn* does not refer to "hurried flight"—neither during the Passover nor afterward. The Scriptures record that when the children of Israel left Egypt, they did not flee in alarm but went out "with a high hand" (Num. 33:3). Clearly,

ghihphazohn is not used to express the physical act of hasty flight. Rather, it is expressing a mental state of dread and alarm. They were to eat the meal in fear and trepidation because of the awesome power that God would manifest in killing the firstborn of Egypt.

Fox's translation conveys the true meaning of Exodus 12:11: "And thus you are to eat it: your hips girded, your sandals on your feet, your sticks in your hand; YOU ARE TO EAT IT IN TREPIDATION [Hebrew *b'ghihphazohn*]—IT IS A PASSOVER-MEAL TO YHWH" (Ex. 12:11, *SB*).

We find a similar translation in the Faithful Version: "And this is the way you shall eat it: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in trepidation. It *is* the LORD'S Passover" (Ex. 12:11).

They were to eat the Passover in trepidation because as they were eating, the Lord was passing over their houses, executing His judgment against the gods of Egypt and killing the firstborn. The Hebrew phrase *b'ghihphazohn* shows the worshipful attitude of mind in which the children of Israel ate the Passover meal. *For a technical exegesis of this Hebrew phrase, see Appendix E.*

After finishing the meal, the children of Israel did not leave their houses, as some claim. Instead, they gathered the bones and other remains of the Passover lambs and burned them. The instructions for burning the remains of the lambs are somewhat awkward in the English translation:

"And you shall not let any of it remain until the morning. And that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire" (Ex. 12:10).

Wording the command more clearly, that which would have remained until morning was to be completely burned by morning. To completely burn the skin, intestines, fat and bones would take 2-3 hours, since bones in particular burn very slowly. Larger bones, such as the skull and the joints of the legs, require the full length of time and a very hot fire to burn them completely. Remember, the entire remains of the Passover lambs were to be burned to ashes before the children of Israel left their houses.

To fulfill all the requirements for the Passover exactly as God had commanded would have taken the children of Israel from 6 PM until approximately 2-3 AM, as we reckon time. In Biblical usage, 2-3 AM is still night. Since sunrise was at approximately 6 AM, the first light of dawn would have been about an hour earlier, or 5 AM by our reckoning.

When we understand God's commands for the Passover, and the length of time that was required to fulfill them, we can see that it was not possible for the Passover and the Exodus to take place in the same night.

The following summary of God's commands in Exodus 12 shows that the Passover itself required a whole night: "And they shall eat the flesh

in that night" (verse 8), which was the night of the fourteenth. Anything which remained was to be burned by morning (verse 10). They were to be fully ready to leave (verse 11). The killing of the firstborn of Egypt and the passing over of the houses of the children of Israel took place about midnight that same night (verses 12-13, 29). And no Israelite could leave his house until the morning, or daybreak, as Fox correctly translates this command (verse 22).

The Answer for Element # 4: To kill, roast and eat the lambs, and to burn the bones and remains, took from approximately 6 PM on the night of the fourteenth until 2-3 hours before sunrise, a total of 8-10 hours.

This concludes our study of the first four elements of the Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12. In the next chapter, we will cover Elements # 5-7.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ISRAEL'S FIRST PASSOVER—PART TWO

As we have seen, the Scriptural account of the Passover and the Exodus has been grossly misrepresented. Much confusion has been caused by the proponents of a 15th Passover, who claim that all the events of the Passover and the Exodus occurred in less than twelve hours. Ignoring the Scriptural definition of *ben ha arbayim* that is revealed in Exodus 16, they claim that the lambs were killed at approximately 3 PM in the afternoon of the 14th and that the Passover meal was not eaten until the 15th day—after the 14th had ended at sunset. They claim that the Lord did not pass over the children of Israel at midnight on the 14th, which was the Passover day—but at midnight on the 15th, which was the night that the Exodus began.

They adamantly argue that the Scriptural account in Exodus 12 supports a Passover and Exodus in the same day. But in their attempts to justify this teaching, they have relied on the traditional Judaic interpretation of Exodus 12. This interpretation takes the plain statements in Exodus 12 totally out of context and distorts their meaning. To add to the confusion, a number of key Hebrew words have been redefined to make it appear that the Scriptures support the traditional practice of a 15th Passover.

The way to eliminate confusion and to come to a true understanding of the account in Exodus 12 is to let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures, as we have been doing throughout this study. It is for this very reason that we are methodically examining every aspect of the events that are recorded in Exodus 12. In this chapter, we will study Elements # 5-7 of Israel's first Passover.

Element # 5) When Did the Children of Israel Leave Their Houses?

In the previous chapter, we examined the Scriptural evidence that the children of Israel killed the lambs at their houses in the land of Goshen, and that they roasted the lambs and ate the Passover meal in their houses on the night of the 14th. Let's review those Scriptures, and we will find the answer to Element # 5.

The commands of God that are recorded in Exodus 12 show that the children of Israel ate the flesh in that night (verse 8). After eating the Passover meal, they burned the leftovers so that nothing would remain until morning (verse 10). At midnight that same night, the Lord passed over their houses and spared their firstborn, but killed the firstborn of the Egyptians (verses 12-13, 29). The children of Israel were dressed for travel and were ready to leave their houses (verse 11).

When did the children of Israel leave their houses? The answer is plainly revealed in the Scriptural record that God has preserved for us:

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, 'Draw out and take a lamb for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover *lamb*. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood *that is* in the bowl, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood in the bowl. And **none of you shall go out of the door of his house until sunrise** [Hebrew *boqer*]' " (Ex. 12:21-22).

God strictly forbade any Israelite to leave his house until sunrise. The Schocken Bible conveys the precise meaning of the Hebrew word *boqer*, showing the exact time at which the children of Israel were permitted to leave: "**Now you—you are not to go out, any man from the entrance to his house, UNTIL DAYBREAK**" (Ex. 12:22, *SB*).

We know that the children of Israel did not leave their houses until the sun was beginning to rise on the morning of the 14th day, because the Scriptural record tells us very clearly that the children of Israel obeyed all that God had commanded: "...And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. **And the children of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; SO THEY DID**" (verses 27-28).

The children of Israel remained in their houses that entire night, just as God had commanded. At midnight, the Lord passed through the land of Egypt and struck down all the firstborn of the Egyptians: "And it came to pass at midnight the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the prison, also all the firstborn of livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was* not a house where there was not one dead" (verses 29-30).

Consider the scene as described in these verses. We are not told how long it took the Lord to pass through the land of Egypt, but it is clear that the plague swept swiftly from house to house. In every Egyptian house there was at least one death! The killing of the firstborn must have been dramatic and terrifying, rather than a silent, peaceful death while sleeping. There were tremendous cries of anguish, fear and lamentation as a result of the sudden awful death of the firstborn. The Egyptians still living must have been in stark terror and dread that they might be killed at any moment as well.

The children of Israel could not have known how long it would take for the Lord to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians. Since they could hear the cries of the Egyptians over the death of their firstborn, they would not have dared to go out of their houses. In the hours that followed, while the Egyptians wailed and lamented over their dead, the children of Israel remained in their houses under the protection of the blood of the Passover lambs. They had no assurance that death would not befall them also, if they left their houses before morning.

There is absolutely no indication in the Scriptural account that the children of Israel left their houses immediately after the Lord had passed at midnight, as the proponents of a 15th Passover claim. On the contrary, the

Scriptures state very clearly that the children of Israel did exactly as God had commanded them: "...A**nd none of you shall go out of the door of his house UNTIL SUNRISE....And the children of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, SO THEY DID**" (Ex. 12:22, 28).

If any of the children of Israel had left their houses before morning, it would be recorded in the Scriptures that some of the people had disobeyed the command of God and had left their houses too soon, and therefore they had died in the plague of the firstborn. The Scriptures would have recorded any disobedience to God's commands, just as it is recorded for us that some of the children of Israel went out to gather manna on the Sabbath, when they were commanded not to do so (Ex. 16:27-28). Since the account in Exodus 12 tells us that the children of Israel obeyed God's commands for the Passover, we know that they stayed in their houses the entire night. They did not leave their houses shortly after midnight, as the advocates of a 15th Passover claim.

The Answer for Element # 5): The children of Israel were in their houses in the land of Goshen during the entire night of the fourteenth, and did not leave until the morning, or daybreak.

Element # 6) What Does "NIGHT" (HEBREW LAILAH*) Mean? What Does "MORNING" (HEBREW* BOQER*) Mean?*

The word "night" is used in a number of verses in the Passover account in Exodus 12. It is found in God's instructions to the children of Israel (verses 8, 12) and in the account of the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt (verses 30-31). It is also used in the account of the Exodus (verse 42). In every occurrence, the word "night" is translated from the Hebrew noun *lailah*.

The word "morning" is used three times in Exodus 12. It occurs twice in God's command to burn the remains of the Passover lambs (verse 10), and once in His command for the children of Israel to remain in their houses after eating the Passover (verse 28). In each occurrence, the word "morning" is translated from the Hebrew noun *boqer*. To make it appear that the Passover and the Exodus occurred in the same night, the advocates of a 15th Passover have redefined the meaning of this Hebrew word. They claim that God's command in Exodus 12:28, forbidding the children of Israel to leave their houses until "morning," meant that the people could leave as soon as the Lord had passed at midnight. By modern standards, this interpretation might seem to be valid, since today every hour after midnight is labeled as AM and is counted as morning. But the Hebrews did not have clocks nor did they reckon time as we do today. We cannot understand the true meaning of God's command if we rely on a modern definition of "morning" to interpret the Scriptural account.

What did God's command in Exodus 12:28 mean to the children of Israel? How did they determine when the "night" had ended and the "morning" had arrived? The answer to this question is clearly revealed in

the Scriptures. Let's look at some Scriptural examples of the use of the words "night" (Hebrew *lailah*) and "morning" (Hebrew *boqer*).

These two Hebrew words are first used in the Creation account in Genesis 1: "And God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light. And God saw the light that *it was* good; and God divided between the light and the darkness. And God called the light day [Hebrew *yohm*], and He called **the darkness night** [Hebrew *lailah*]. And the evening [Hebrew *erev*] and the morning [Hebrew *boqer*] were day one" (Gen. 1:3-5). *For a technical exegesis of these verses, see Appendix A.*

In the very beginning, God designated the dark portion of each twenty-four hour day as *lailah*, or "night." There is no room to question or debate the Scriptural meaning of *lailah*. In every occurrence in the Old Testament, *lailah* is consistently used to name the darkness of night. That was the meaning of *lailah* at the time of the Passover and the Exodus, as the account of the plague of the locusts clearly shows:

"And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day [Hebrew *yohm*], **and all the night** [Hebrew *lailah*]. **When it was morning** [Hebrew *boqer*], the east wind brought the locusts" (Ex. 10:13).

This verse is significant because it shows a complete period of the light of day (*yohm*) followed by a complete period of the darkness of night (*lailah*), which ends with the next morning (*boqer*). This usage of the Hebrew words in sequence makes it clear that there is a distinct division between "**night**" (*lailah*) and "**morning**" (*boqer*). The verse clearly records that the wind blew "**all the night**" before the morning came and the locusts arrived—showing that "**morning**" (*boqer*) occurs **after the darkness of night** (*lailah*) has ended. This verse does not convey or indicate in any way whatsoever that "morning" (*boqer*) begins as soon as midnight has passed. There is absolutely no Scriptural basis for interpreting the time period that falls between midnight and dawn as "morning." THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT SUPPORT ANY SUCH DEFINITION OF "MORNING."

Throughout the Old Testament, there is a clear-cut division between morning (*boqer*) and the darkness of night (*lailah*). This Scriptural division of time is upheld by the leading Hebrew authorities, who define *lailah* as the period of time from the end of *ben ha arbayim*, when darkness has fallen, to *boqer*, when morning is dawning (*Englishman's Hebrew Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* and *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*).

The Passover events that are recorded in Exodus 12 confirm this definition of *lailah*. The sequence of events in the death of the firstborn makes it very clear that the hours after midnight are still "**night**"—not "morning." Notice: "For I will go through the land of Egypt **in that night**, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt....And it came to pass **at midnight**, that the LORD smote all the firstborn....And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and

all his servants, and all the Egyptians....And he called for [sent a message to] Moses and Aaron **by night**..." (Ex. 12:8, 12, 29, 30, 31, *JPSA*).

These Scriptures tell us plainly that the firstborn of the Egyptians were struck down "**at midnight**." Thus, it was past midnight when Pharaoh and the Egyptians rose up, and Pharaoh sent a message to Moses and Aaron. According to Scripture, these events took place "**in the night**" and "**by night**." Here is conclusive evidence that the period of darkness which follows midnight is Scripturally defined as "night." In every verse cited, the Hebrew word translated "**night**" is *lailah*, which always refers to the darkness of night. There can be no doubt whatsoever that *lailah*—as defined and used in the Scriptures—includes the dark hours between midnight and dawn.

The Faithful Version reads: "And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was* not a house where there was not one dead. And during the night he sent word to Moses and Aaron saying, 'Rise up! Get away from my people, both you and the children of Israel! And go serve the LORD as you have said" (Ex. 12:30-31).

One 15th Passover advocate claims that the children of Israel did not have to remain in their houses after midnight because Moses left his house and went to Pharaoh's court immediately after receiving his message, which was sent shortly after midnight. But the Scriptural account does not record that Moses went to Pharaoh's court after receiving the message. To the contrary, the Scriptures show that **Moses did not see Pharaoh that night**. Moses' last appearance in Pharaoh's court took place **before** the death of the firstborn of Egypt, as recorded in Exodus 10. At that time, Moses proclaimed that he would not come to Pharaoh's court again:

"And Pharaoh said to him [Moses], 'Get away from me! Take heed to yourself! See my face no more, for in the day you see my face you shall die.' And Moses said, 'You have spoken well. **I will never see your face again**' " (Ex. 10: 28-29).

Moses did not go to Pharaoh after the death of the firstborn at midnight. **Pharaoh sent word or a message to Moses**, as Exodus 12 clearly records. During his final appearance in Pharaoh's court—before the death of the firstborn—Moses prophesied that Pharaoh's servants would deliver that message:

"And Moses said, 'Thus says the LORD, "About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt. And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, even to the firstborn of the slavegirl that *is* behind the mill; and the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel not even a dog shall move his tongue, against man or beast, so that you may know that the LORD puts a difference *between* the Egyptians and

Israel. And **all these, your servants, shall come down to me and bow themselves down to me**, saying: "You and all the people that follow you—get out!" And after that I will go out.' And **he** [Moses] **went out from Pharaoh in flaming anger**" (Ex. 11:4-8).

The Scriptures do not support the claim that Moses went to Pharaoh's court after the Lord had passed at midnight. Moses did not see Pharaoh's face after the death of the firstborn of Egypt. Pharaoh's servants came to Moses, bowed down in trembling fear and delivered the message. We are not told how long after midnight they came, but the Scriptural account makes it clear that the time was still night (*lailah*).

The Answer to the First Part of Element # 6: "Night," translated from the Hebrew *lailah*, is the entire dark period of each twenty-four hour day. It extends from the end of *ben ha arbayim*, when darkness has come, to the arrival of *boqer*, or sunrise/morning.

Determining the Scriptural Definition of "MORNING"

In our study of the Passover commands in Exodus 12, we learned that the word "morning" is translated from the Hebrew word *boqer*. The advocates of a 15th Passover have redefined the meaning of this Hebrew word in an attempt to show Scriptural support for their version of the Passover events. Since their false definition of *boqer* has been a key factor in the arguments for a 15th Passover, we will cover it in detail so that we can fully understand how their interpretation of the Passover events conflicts with the Scriptural account. The following explanation of the Hebrew term *boqer* is given in a doctrinal dissertation by Dr. Robert L. Kuhn and Lester L. Grabbe:

"*Boqer*, though, is somewhat more troublesome. In English we can use the term 'morning' for any time between midnight and noon. **We have not found any passage [of Scripture] which specifically begins *boqer* with the middle of the night**. It often refers to the light period of the day from sunrise until about the middle of the day just as English 'morning' does" (*The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 8, emphasis added).

This is quite an admission! These two scholars could not find a single Scripture to support their claim that *boqer* begins shortly after midnight. On the other hand, they admit that many passages of Scripture show that *boqer* "**refers to the light period of the day**," which begins at sunrise.

That is incredible! These scholars begin their explanation by telling us that the Scriptures nowhere refer to *boqer* as beginning in the middle of the night, yet that is the conclusion they ultimately arrive at by their circuitous reasoning, which uses a modern method of reckoning time to define a Hebrew word that is over 3500 years old and never had such a meaning! They state, "It might be noted here that Exodus 11 and 12 emphasize that the death angel passed about midnight (11:4; 12:29). The Israelites already

knew the death angel would come by about then. Once the angel passed, the danger was also past. Since Israel was told to eat in haste and to burn anything left until evidently 'morning' (*boqer*), IS NOT THIS A GOOD INDICATION, in the context, that ***boqer* began just after midnight just as it does in our modern parlance?**" (Ibid., p. 9, emphasis added.)

After implying that the context supports this definition of *boqer*, they admit that THERE IS NO REAL SCRIPTURAL PROOF. Instead, they rely on the later traditions of the Jews to support their views:

"There is NO ABSOLUTE PROOF for this. But it is significant that certain Jewish groups (including the Samaritans) later required everything to be eaten by midnight (see *Pesahim* 10:9; *Zebahim* 5:8). What was not consumed by then was burned. Is this what God meant when He commanded them to burn anything left until *boqer* and not to go out of their houses until *boqer*? This is certainly indicated by the context. In any case we have evidence [we will examine that evidence shortly] that *boqer* could include a considerable period of time before sunrise. Thus, there is no contradiction or difficulty with the statements that Israel left while it was 'morning' and yet also went out 'in the night.'

"**A second possible explanation** is as follows: the Israelites could be said to go out at night because that is when Pharaoh's command came. This is the explanation given by such eminent Jewish commentators as Rashi and Ibn Ezra. Even according to it the Israelites did not have to wait until sunrise to begin getting under way. Since God commanded them to stay in their houses only until 'morning,' not 'sunrise.' But even if they waited until shortly before sunrise to leave their houses, they could be said to go out in the night simply because that was when Pharaoh was forced into ordering their departure" (Ibid., p. 9, emphasis added).

Notice how these scholars present their "evidence" for a Passover and Exodus in the same night: "...evidently...a good indication...as it does in our modern parlance...**no absolute proof**...certainly indicated...could include...second possible explanation...could be said...." These inconclusive expressions verify what they have openly admitted—that they have NO SCRIPTURAL PROOF to support their claims. They argue in the same manner as lawyers who seek a verdict of agreement by what is called in legal terms "reasonable doubt." The arguments that they have presented do not measure up to the standard for establishing and proving Biblical doctrine.

In stating their views, these scholars were not able to point to any Scripture which clearly supports their statements and conclusions. Rather than correcting their views to conform to the facts that are clearly recorded in the Scriptural account, they chose to rely on theoretical suppositions and Jewish traditions. When we analyze their statements, we find that their definition of "morning," or *boqer*, is based on the false supposition that there was no reason for the children of Israel to remain in their houses after the Lord had passed at midnight. Why would the Lord require them to remain in their houses until sunrise?

Those who hold this view have failed to consider that the houses of the children of Israel were scattered throughout the land of Goshen. Moreover, the children of Israel numbered nearly two million. There was no possible way to notify the people when the command of Pharaoh was given, allowing them to leave Egypt. It would have required many hours of travel in the dark hours after midnight to carry Pharaoh's message to every household in every part of Goshen. But *boqer*, beginning at the crack of dawn, could easily be seen from every house. That is why God commanded them not to leave until "morning," or *boqer*. When the children of Israel could see the first light of dawn, they knew that it was the set time to leave their houses.

Scholars who support a 15th Passover will not admit that "morning," or *boqer*, begins when the first light of dawn appears. If they admit that *boqer* does not include the hours between midnight and dawn, they will have to acknowledge that it was impossible for the Passover and the Exodus to occur in the same night. Not willing to admit their error, they cling to their false interpretation of *boqer* and twist the Scriptures out of context.

As part of their "evidence," these scholars have selected a verse in the book of Ruth. They state, "However, *boqer* can also be used in reference to the latter portion of the night before sunrise. Several passages show this: 'She lay down at his feet until morning (*boqer*), then she got up before it was possible for one to recognize the person beside him' (Ruth 3:14 [Lester L. Grabbe's translation]). This shows the time was long before sunrise while still very dark" (Ibid., pp. 8-9).

These scholars view Ruth 3:14 as Scriptural evidence that "morning," or *boqer*, includes the time "long before sunrise while still very dark." Is this a valid interpretation of Ruth 3:14? To find the answer, let us apply Rule # 3 of the Fourteen Rules for Bible Study, which are listed in Chapter One. Let's examine the context of this verse.

When we read the third chapter of the book of Ruth, we find that it is relating the events that occurred when Ruth followed the instructions of her mother-in-law Naomi to go to the threshing floor of Boaz, a kinsman. Boaz was winnowing "...barley **tonight** in the threshing floor....And when Boaz had eaten and had drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. And she came softly... and lay down. And it came to pass **at midnight**, the man was startled and turned himself. And, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, 'Who *are* you?' And she answered, 'I *am* your handmaid Ruth.'...And he said, 'Blessed *be* you of the LORD....Lie down until the **morning** [*boqer*].' And she lay at his feet until the **morning** [*boqer*]. And **she rose up before one could discern another**. And he said, 'Do not let it be known that a woman came to the floor'....And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, '*Is* that you, my daughter?' And she told her all that the man had done to her....Then she said, 'Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will fall. For the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter today' " (Ruth 3:2-18).

When we take a close look at the Scriptural account, we find that three different terms are used to show the time sequence of these events. In Verse 2 we find the word "tonight," which is translated from *lailah*. In Verse 8 we find the word "midnight," which is translated from *lailah* ("night") and *ghatzee* ("in the middle"). In Verse 13 we read that Ruth was to stay until "**morning**," or *boqer*. Verse 14 tells us that she arose "before one could discern another." The question that needs to be answered is this: How dark was it at the time she arose to go home? Verse 14 does not give us a definitive time, but states only that there was not enough light "to discern another." Dr. Grabbe has interpreted this statement as showing that the time was "long before sunrise." But when we study the Scriptural account, we find other statements that contradict this definition.

The Scriptural account states that it was **midnight** when Boaz suddenly awoke and discovered Ruth's presence (verse 8). It was **at midnight** that he told her, "Tarry **this night** [Hebrew *lailah*] ...lie down until **the morning** [Hebrew boqer]" (verse 13). If "morning," or *boqer*, begins just after midnight, Boaz would not have told Ruth to lie down again **until the morning had arrived**. The fact that Boaz told her, "Stay **tonight** [Hebrew *lailah*]," shows that *lailah* had not yet ended. Since Boaz spoke these words at midnight, *lailah* is clearly referring to the period of darkness **following midnight**. *Lailah* did not end until the first light of dawn, or *boqer*. Ruth did not leave the threshing-floor until the dawn of morning. Although the day was dawning, and there was enough light for Ruth to find her way back into the village of Bethlehem to Naomi's house, it was not light enough for her to be recognized by others.

There is only one brief period of time that fits the Scriptural use of *boqer*, or "morning," in Ruth 3:14. "Morning" in this verse is specifically referring to the time when the first light appears in the eastern sky, just before the sun rises. At sunrise, it is light enough for one to recognize another. But when the first faint light of dawn appears, it is still dark enough not to be able to identify a person. This is the exact time that "night," or *lailah*, comes to an end, and "morning," or *boqer*, begins.

Morning, or *boqer*, does not include any part of the night, or *lailah*. *Boqer* begins with the first light of dawn, just before the sun rises above the horizon. Nowhere in Scripture is there any indication that *boqer* is "long before sunrise" or "the latter portion of the night." The Scriptures never refer to the dark hours after midnight as *boqer*, or "morning." In the Scriptures, the period of time after midnight is always called "night," or *lailah*.

The use of *lailah* and *boqer* in the book of Ruth is consistent with all other Scriptures. The word "morning," or *boqer*, in Ruth 3:14 is no exception. In this verse, "morning" refers to the beginning of the light period of a twenty-four day, as it has from the creation of the world. The words of Boaz, as recorded in the previous verse, show the utter folly in claiming that *boqer* includes the hours "long before sunrise." Boaz told Ruth, "Stay **tonight** [Hebrew *lailah*], and it shall be that in the morning [Hebrew *boqer*] if he will redeem you—...Lie down **until the morning** [Hebrew *boqer*]" (verse 13).

It would be ridiculous to claim that the Israelites of that day arose "long before sunrise" to carry on their business, yet that is what we would have to conclude if we accept Dr. Grabbe's definition of *boqer*. But if we are willing to believe the Scriptures, we will acknowledge that *boqer* in Ruth 3:13 and 14 obviously cannot be referring to any portion of the night. The Scriptural context of the verse that Dr. Grabbe quoted as evidence for his definition of *boqer* shows how utterly illogical that definition is! Clearly, the use of *boqer* in this Scriptural passage shows that this term refers to the morning hours, not to the hours "long before sunrise" or to "the latter part of the night."

In every Scriptural occurrence, *boqer* refers to the morning, which begins when the night, or *lailah*, comes to an end. When the darkness of night ends and the first light of dawn appears in the east, that is the beginning of *boqer*. While the light is very faint when *boqer* begins, it still marks the end of *lailah*, or night.

In the book of Exodus, we find additional proof that *boqer* begins with the light of dawn. God told Moses, "You go to Pharaoh **in the morning** [*boqer*]. Lo, he goes out to the water. And you shall stand by the river's bank until he comes. And you shall take in your hand the rod which was turned to a snake" (Ex. 7:15).

Notice that Moses was to meet Pharaoh "in the morning," or *boqer*. Why would Pharaoh go to the Nile River in the morning? The answer is obvious when we understand that the Egyptians worshipped the Nile River and the sun as gods. Pharaoh was considered a god-king. As such, part of his duties included worshiping the sun and the river at sunrise. He also bathed in the "holy water of the Nile" in the morning as a religious ritual.

When Pharaoh hardened his heart, God commanded Moses and Aaron, " 'Take your rod, and stretch out your hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their canals, and upon their pools, and upon every reservoir of their waters, *that* they may become blood'....And he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river, **in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants.** And all the waters in the river were **turned to blood**" (Ex. 7:19-20).

These verses tell us that God's commands were carried out in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, showing that *boqer*, or "morning," is not referring to the dark of the night. There was sufficient light at *boqer* for Pharaoh and his servants to observe Aaron as he struck the waters and to see the waters turn to blood. If *boqer* were in the dark of the night, it would have been impossible to see that the waters had been turned to blood.

Again, before the plague of flies, God commanded Moses to meet Pharaoh at the river: "And the LORD said to Moses, '**Rise up early in the morning** [Hebrew *boqer*] and stand before Pharaoh. Lo, he comes forth to the water...' " (Ex. 8:20).

This verse plainly refers to the beginning of *boqer*. Moses was told to rise up "**early** in the morning" (*boqer*). At the first light of dawn, Moses was to get up and go to the river. Obviously, God would not command Moses to go to Pharaoh in the dark hours following midnight, and Pharaoh would not come down to the water at midnight or shortly afterwards. The confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh was to occur at sunrise, which was the exact time of the river-sun ritual performed by the god-king Pharaoh. This use of *boqer* in the events leading up to the Exodus shows that "morning" does not begin in the dark hours after midnight, as Kuhn and Grabbe claim. According to Scripture, *boqer* begins with **the first light of dawn**.

In their dissertation concerning the Passover and the Exodus, Kuhn and Grabbe present other Scriptural references as "evidence" that *boqer* includes the period of darkness after midnight. But when we examine these verses in their Scriptural context, we find no indication that "morning," or *boqer*, refers to any time near midnight. For your further study, these references are found in I Samuel 19:10 and I Kings 3:21.

Another attempt to prove that *boqer* includes the dark hours after midnight is found in these scholars' narration of the three watches of the night. They state, "A further indication is found in the 'watches' used for dividing the night. There were three of these. The first third of the night fell into an unnamed watch, though this may have been called the 'evening watch' (Lam. 2:19). The second was called the 'middle watch' (Judges 7:19) [his reference was incorrectly stated as Judges 7:10]. The last part of the night fell into the 'morning (*habboqer*) watch' (Ex. 14:24; I Sam. 11:11). This is a further indication that 'morning' could be applied to the last part of the night" (*The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 9).

A careful examination of these references to the night watches will demonstrate that they do not support the claim that *boqer* includes the dark hours after midnight. Let us examine one of these verses:

Lamentations 2:19 says, "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the **watches**...." This verse is referring to the beginning of all three night watches. It does not specifically refer to the first watch of the night and does not designate which hours are included. If the watches were set in the spring of the year, when the days and nights are nearly equal in duration, they would be divided as follows: the first watch would be from 6 to 10 PM, the second or "middle watch" from 10 PM to 2 AM, and the third or "morning watch" from 2 to 6 AM. The fact that the third watch was called the "morning watch" does not mean that the dark hours from 2 to 6 AM are part of the "morning," or *boqer*. The third watch, or "morning watch," was the final watch of the **night**. It was called the "morning watch" because it ended when morning arrived. It began long before *boqer*, or dawn, but continued as a time of watching past the arrival of *boqer* and the beginning of daylight.

In attempting to show Scriptural support for their definition of "morning," Kuhn and Grabbe also present a reference from the New

Testament. They state, "Mark 1:35 speaks of Jesus rising early in the morning long before sunrise. While the Hebrew word naturally is not used, it shows the concept of 'morning' including the time before sunrise as well as the time afterward" (Ibid., p. 9).

In the *King James Version*, Mark 1:35 reads as follows: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed...." At first glance, this verse might appear to support Kuhn and Grabbe's definition of "morning." However, as the marginal reference in Bullinger's *Companion Bible* and other editions of the Bible show, the *KJV* translation of Mark 1:35 is a poor rendering of the Greek text. A leading Greek-English interlinear verifies that the wording in the *King James Version* does not accurately convey the meaning of the Greek text and correctly translates this verse as follows: "And very early **while yet night** having risen up..." (Berry, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*).

Berry has translated this verse to show the exact meaning of the Greek text. The Greek word that is translated "**night**" is *ennuxon*, which specifically means IN THE NIGHT or AT NIGHT. The use of this Greek word in Mark 1:35 does not support the claim that the dark hours of the night are "morning."

Understanding that this verse is incorrectly translated in the *King James Version* is important from another point of view. Dr. Lester L. Grabbe was a professor of Greek, a reputed expert in the Greek language, and for him to choose a verse that was incorrectly translated from the Greek text raises grave doubts about the honesty of his research. As an expert in New Testament Greek, as a professor who taught Greek to Bible students, surely he was aware of the correct wording of Mark 1:35 in the Greek text. Why did he use a mistranslation of this verse to support his claim? If he were not an expert in New Testament Greek, this oversight might have been explained as a lack of knowledge. But since he is an expert in New Testament Greek, such negligence is inexcusable. It demonstrates a careless disregard for Scriptural truth! When we closely examine the writings of Kuhn and Grabbe, we find a consistent pattern of choosing to follow the interpretations of men and misrepresenting the true facts of Scripture.

The Answer for Element # 6: "Night," translated from the Hebrew *lailah*, includes the entire dark period of each twenty-four hour day. "Morning," translated from the Hebrew *boqer*, does not include the dark hours after midnight. *Boqer* begins at the crack of dawn, when the first light of day brings the night to an end.

Element # 7) When Did the Children of Israel Spoil the Egyptians?

The proponents of a 15th Passover claim that the spoiling of the Egyptians took place before the Passover and the death of the firstborn of Egypt, which was the tenth and final plague. Some view God's instructions to Moses in Exodus 11 as evidence that the spoiling began shortly after the

ninth plague. Others claim that the spoiling began even earlier, based on the words that God spoke to Moses when He called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. These words were spoken to Moses as he stood before the burning bush in the land of Midian:

"And I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst of it. And after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. And it shall be that when you go, you shall not go empty. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her that stays in her house, jewels of silver and jewels of gold and clothing. And you shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters. And you shall retrieve *these from* the Egyptians" (Ex. 3:20-22).

The fact that God gave these instructions to Moses in advance does not mean that the children of Israel began to spoil the Egyptians as soon as the plagues began. The children of Israel did not begin to spoil the Egyptians until God gave them favor in the sight of the Egyptians. This favor was a special miracle of God, in which He changed the minds of the Egyptians. The words of God in Exodus 3 reveal the exact time that the favor was granted. Notice the chronological sequence of events: "And **I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with all My wonders** [plagues] which I will do in the midst of it. And **AFTER THAT he will let you go**. **And I will give this people favor** in the sight of the Egyptians..." (verses 20-21).

These verses do not support the assertion that favor was granted to the children of Israel long before the death of the firstborn, which was the final plague or "wonder" that struck Egypt. To the contrary, God declared to Moses that all of His plagues would strike Egypt before He would grant favor to the children of Israel. No favor would be given until the plagues were completed and the children of Israel had been freed from their bondage. When God had given them victory over the Egyptians, then the children of Israel would gather the spoil from their enemies.

The sequence of events that is revealed in Exodus 3 cannot be ignored when we attempt to understand God's later instructions to Moses in Exodus 11. Although those instructions were given before the final plague against Egypt, they cannot be interpreted as evidence that the spoiling took place before the time that God had appointed. Let us examine these instructions, which were given after the plague of thick darkness: "And the LORD had said to Moses, 'I will yet bring one plague [the death of the firstborn] on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward, he will let you go from here. When he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out from here altogether. **Speak now in the ears of the people**, and let every man ask from his neighbor, and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and jewels of gold.' And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. And the man Moses *was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (Ex. 11:1-3).

The words "**Speak now**" in Verse 2 have led many to conclude that the spoiling of the Egyptians began at that time. But the words that are used

in the Hebrew text do not support the immediacy of action that these English words imply. The Hebrew verb that is translated "speak" is not a command to speak at that time but an exhortation to be ready to speak because the time of fulfillment was near. Fox's translation helps to convey the meaning of the text: "**Pray speak** in the ears of the people..." (Ex. 11:2, *SB*).

The instructions for spoiling the Egyptians were given to the children of Israel at the same time that the instructions for the Passover were given. Exodus 12 records Moses' delivery of the Passover instructions to the elders: "Then Moses called for **all the elders of Israel** and said to them..." (verse 21). After receiving all of God's instructions from Moses, the elders delivered them to the children of Israel. The children of Israel bowed their heads in worship when they heard God's instructions for the Passover day (verses 27-28). These instructions included the spoiling of the Egyptians, which would take place after the final plague against Egypt and the release of the children of Israel from bondage.

In the morning of the Passover day, the children of Israel fulfilled God's instructions to spoil the Egyptians: "And the Egyptians were urging the people, that they might send them out of the land quickly, for they said, 'We *are* all dead men.' And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. **And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses. And they asked for articles of silver, and articles of gold, and clothing from the Egyptians. And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians**, and they granted their request, **and they stripped the Egyptians**" (Ex. 12:33-36).

Here is plain Scriptural evidence that the spoiling of the Egyptians was completed **after** the Passover and the death of the firstborn, when the Egyptians were filled with a sense of impending doom. In their urgency to be rid of the children of Israel, the Egyptians heaped upon them all the clothing and jewelry that they desired, as God had said. The clothing and jewelry were literally thrust upon the children of Israel by the Egyptians, as a ransom for their lives. For they said, "...WE ARE ALL DEAD MEN!" The Egyptians who were not killed in the final plague must have been in absolute terror that God would strike them down, as He had their firstborn. Fearful of being struck dead, they gave the children of Israel everything they asked.

Those who promote a 15th Passover reject the statements that are clearly recorded in the Scriptural account. They refuse to acknowledge that the spoiling of the Egyptians was not fulfilled until after the death of the firstborn. Allowing time for the spoiling to take place after the Passover complicates their attempts to fit the Passover and the Exodus into the same night. But the truth of Scripture is that God's promise to the children of Israel that they would not go out empty was fulfilled in the hours before the Exodus. When their adversaries had acknowledged defeat, then the children of Israel collected the spoils of the victory that God had given them.

The Answer for Element # 7: The children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians after the completion of the plagues, when God gave them favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. On the morning of the Passover day, they collected the spoils of their victory over the Egyptians.

In this chapter we have studied Elements # 5-7 of the Passover in Egypt, examining every major argument concerning these aspects of the Passover, and showing the true Scriptural chronology of the events of the Passover day. In the following chapter we will study Element # 8, which concerns the Exodus and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EXODUS AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The Exodus from Egypt was an immense undertaking. The children of Israel did not simply wander out of the land of Egypt with their flocks and herds. The Exodus had to be properly organized, and all the people had to be instructed in advance what to do and where to go to assemble for the march. What an event it must have been! This was an entire nation being born at once, as it were, and moving wholly, bodily, with their possessions and animals—leaving forever! Their release from abject slavery had arrived! They were leaving as freed men and women, ransomed and personally redeemed by God Himself.

In this chapter, we will thoroughly examine the Scriptures to learn exactly how, when, and where the Exodus began. As we study the Scriptural account, we will begin to understand the magnitude of this event, and the time and logistics involved in getting so many people organized to march out of the country—perhaps as many as two million or more. But before we begin our study, let's review the events that led up to the Exodus:

Element # 1) The Passover lambs were killed immediately after sunset, or *erev*, of the thirteenth, at the beginning of *ben ha arbayim* of the fourteenth—which is the time between sunset and dark.
Element # 2) The lambs were killed at the houses of the children of Israel.
Element # 3) The children of Israel were in their houses in the land of Goshen during the Passover. The children of Israel did not gather in tents at Rameses before keeping the Passover.
Element # 4) To kill, roast, and eat the lambs, and to burn the remains, took all the hours from the beginning of *ben ha arbayim* until 2-3 hours before the sun rose on the morning of the fourteenth.
Element # 5) The children of Israel remained in their houses in the land of Goshen all night after keeping the Passover. They did not leave their houses as soon as the Lord had passed at midnight, but remained in them until morning, or daybreak.
Element # 6) The word "night," translated from the Hebrew *lailah*, refers to the entire dark period of each twenty-four hour day. "Morning," translated from the Hebrew *boqer*, does not begin immediately after midnight and does not include any of the dark hours of the night. *Boqer* begins at the first light of dawn, when the sun rises and brings the night to an end.
Element # 7) The children of Israel spoiled the Egyptians after the completion of the plagues, when God gave them favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. On the morning of the Passover day, they collected the spoils of their victory over the Egyptians.

We are now ready to study **Element # 8**, which differs from the other elements that we have studied because it focuses on the Exodus. As we have done with the first seven elements concerning the Passover, we will study all Scriptures relating to the Exodus in great detail so that we can come to a full understanding of this significant event.

Element # 8) When and Where Did the Exodus Begin?

The advocates of a 15th Passover are beset with many problems in their attempt to fit the events of the Passover and the Exodus into the same night, which allows only 9-11 hours from the killing of the Passover lambs until the beginning of the Exodus. In order to justify a 15th Passover, they have redefined the Hebrew terms that the Scriptures use to reveal the time at which the Passover began and the time at which the children of Israel left their houses to begin the Exodus. To make it appear that the Passover and the Exodus both occurred on the night of the 15th, they maintain that the children of Israel had assembled in Rameses before keeping the Passover. However, as we learned in our study of Element # 3, the Scriptural record shows that the children of Israel did not gather in Rameses before the Passover, but kept the Passover in their houses in the land of Goshen.

Ignoring the plain statements of Scripture, the proponents of a 15th Passover regard a Passover on the night of the 14th as unacceptable because, as they view it, there would be a wasted day between the Passover and the Exodus. They see no reason why God would allow a "day's delay" before the beginning of the Exodus. The truth is that this erroneous concept exists only in their minds. If they had been honest and unbiased in their study of the Scriptural record, they would see that there was no delay at all in the events that occurred between the 14th Passover and the Exodus on the following night. But because of their preconceived notions, they cling to an imaginary sequence of events that is based on false and lying premises, and adamantly maintain that the Passover and the Exodus both occurred on the night of the 15th. As a result of combining the Passover and the Exodus, they have reduced the eight days that God ordained for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to only a seven-day observance.

In rejecting the 14th Passover, these scholars are following the error of the leaders of Judaism, who long ago departed from the Passover ordinance that God had established and began to observe a 15th Passover. To justify this practice, they created false chronologies of the Passover and the Exodus by misinterpreting the Scriptural account. They were the first to claim that the children of Israel ate the Passover at Rameses on the night of the 15th, just before the Exodus began. They were the first to argue that a Passover on the night of the 14th would allow a "day's delay" before beginning the Exodus.

Embracing these false interpretations of the Scriptural account, the advocates of a 15th Passover promote a seven-day Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, calling the entire seven days "the Feast of Passover," in accord with Jewish tradition. As one writer asserts, "The Passover [meal] itself, then, introduces the seven-day festival of Passover, or Unleavened

Bread. It was actually a seven-day festival, not an eight-day festival" (W.F. Dankenbring, *When Should the Passover Be Observed?*, p. 8).

This teaching violates the Scriptural command that the Passover be observed as a separate feast on the fourteenth day, followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, making a total of eight days. The records of history verify that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were originally observed as an eight-day festival. The observance was later reduced to seven days by men, contrary to the commands of God.

Because they have relied on the Jewish tradition of a 15th Passover, Kuhn and Grabbe have discarded the true, Scriptural chronology of the Passover. They strongly support the Jewish tradition of a Passover on the same night as the Exodus. As we study their version of the Passover and the Exodus, we need to carefully note how they present the Scriptures. We will see that they use Scriptures that appear to justify their claims, while ignoring other Scriptures which clearly contradict the chronology that they have presented. Their error begins with the claim that the lambs were killed in the afternoon of the 14th, toward the end of the day. Building on that unscriptural foundation, they make a second false claim: "The children of Israel were gathered in Rameses prior to the Passover." As we have seen in our study of Element # 3 and Element # 5, both of these claims are contradicted by the Scriptural account.

After building their theories on false premises, incomplete facts and misleading interpretations, they scorn the truth of Scripture and reject a Passover on the night of the 14th as completely illogical. They support this opinion by claiming that a Passover before the night of the 15th would have allowed "a day's delay" before the Exodus. Here are their statements: "Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron at midnight. The Egyptians were as urgent to get the Israelites out as the Israelites were to leave. A day's delay would have been unusual and there is no indication of one in Exodus. (Ex. 12:39 says explicitly that 'they could not tarry.') **They evidently got underway in a period between midnight and dawn which could be called both 'morning' and 'night,'** thus staying in their houses until 'morning' while still leaving at 'night' " (*The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 15, emphasis added).

In our study of Element # 6, we learned that the Scriptural definitions of "morning" and "night" allow no room for such a chronology of events on the Passover night. The fact that "morning" (*boqer*) is never used in Scripture to refer to any hour of the "night" (*lailah*) shows that their theoretical scenario has no valid foundation. It is absolutely false, misleading and contrary to the Scriptural usage of the terms "morning" and "night." Remember, truth agrees with Scripture; error does not agree with Scripture.

Having rejected the true chronology of the Passover, Kuhn and Grabbe appeal to human reasoning to support their speculation concerning a "day's delay": "One might wonder why they would have waited the entire daylight portion of the 14th and then finally left only sometime after sundown on the 15th. They were already ready. They had already spoiled the

Egyptians before the Passover. [Not true!] They had spent a sleepless night. The Egyptians wanted to rush them off. Why would they have delayed, even assuming they had to wait until sunrise before leaving their houses? They could still have been underway long before nightfall" (Ibid., p. 16).

This scenario completely ignores the logistics of such an enormous undertaking as the Exodus, which involved about two million or more people with all their flocks and herds. When we understand the magnitude of the Exodus, all these false premises and distorted views of Scripture fall by the wayside. Let's go back in Exodus 12 to the time that God ordained the Passover day and gave it the name it still bears. Remember, the Passover received this name because God passed over the houses of the children of Israel:

" 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt **this night** [the night of the fourteenth], and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I *am* the LORD. And the blood shall be a sign to you upon the houses where you *are*. And **when I see the blood, I will PASS OVER you.** And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you* when I smite the land of Egypt. And **THIS DAY** [the Passover day] **SHALL BE A MEMORIAL TO YOU.** And you shall keep it [the Passover] a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast **AS A LAW FOREVER**'....'And you shall observe this thing as a law [the Passover day and its ceremonies] to you and to your children forever. And it shall be when you have come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He has promised that **you shall keep this service**. And it will be, when your children shall say to you, 'What *does* this service *mean* to you? Then you shall say, '**It *is* the sacrifice of the *LORD'S* Passover**, **Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel** in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses' " (Ex. 12:12-14; 24-27).

God did not establish the Passover day as a memorial of the Exodus! The Scriptures clearly teach that the Passover day commemorates the passing over of the houses of the children of Israel. The Passover day, the fourteenth day of the first month, DOES NOT COMMEMORATE OR CELEBRATE THE EXODUS. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins on the following day, the fifteenth day of the first month, is the feast that God established to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt. This Feast, which immediately follows the Passover day, and lasts for seven days, makes a total festival season of eight days, according to the commands of God.

God's Commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread

God's instructions for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread begin in Exodus 12:15, following His command to keep the Passover as a separate memorial feast. Let us examine the commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; howbeit the first day ye shall [have] put away leaven out of your houses, for whosoever eateth leavened bread

from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for **in this selfsame day** [the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] **have I brought your hosts** [armies] **out of the land of Egypt**; therefore shall ye observe **this day** throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month **at even** [Hebrew *ba erev*, "at sunset," ending the Passover day and beginning the 15th], ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even [Hebrew *ba erev*, "at sunset," ending the 21st day and beginning the 22nd]. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses; for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread" (Ex. 12:15-20, *JPSA*).

Coulter accurately translates *ba erev* as "at sunset," showing that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins immediately after the Passover day ends: "And you shall keep the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread, for **in this same day** [the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] I have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall keep this day in your generations as a law forever. In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month **at sunset** [ending the Passover day and beginning the 15th], you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at sunset [ending the 21st day]" (Ex. 12:17-18).

Some have erroneously equated the command in Exodus 12:6 to keep the Passover lambs "**until** the fourteenth" and slay them "**at even**" with the command in Exodus 12:18 to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread "**on** the fourteenth day of the month **at even**." The wording of these two commands in the Hebrew text shows that they **do not refer to the same time** on the fourteenth. In Exodus 12:6, the words "at even" are translated from *ben ha arbayim*, which occurs at the **beginning of the 14th**. In Exodus 12:18, the words "at even" are translated from *ba erev*, and refer to the **end of the 14th** at sunset. *For a technical exegesis of the commands in Exodus 12:6 and 12:18, see Appendix D and Appendix F.*

The Scriptures make it explicitly clear that the Passover day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are two separate feasts with **two different meanings**. The Passover day, the 14th day of the first month, was established as a memorial feast to commemorate God's passing over the houses of the children of Israel. The 15th day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was established as a memorial feast in commemoration of the Exodus: "**And you shall keep the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread, for [for the following reason] in this SAME DAY I HAVE BROUGHT YOUR ARMIES OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT**..." (verse 17).

Although both the Passover and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are memorial feasts, they are **not** to be observed on the same day! The commands of God as recorded in Leviticus 23 confirm the

separate identity and timing of these two feast days: "These are the appointed seasons of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season. In the first month, **on the fourteenth day of the month at dusk** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*], **is the LORD's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread** unto the LORD; seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation....in the seventh day is a holy convocation..." (Lev. 23:4-8, *JPSA*).

Notice Coulter's translation of these commands: "These *are* the appointed feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim in their appointed seasons. In **the fourteenth day of the** first month, **between the two evenings** [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, beginning immediately after sunset of the 13th], **is the LORD'S Passover**. **And on the fifteenth day** [beginning at sunset (*ba erev*) of the 14th] of the same month ***is*** **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** to the LORD, You must eat unleavened bread seven days" (Lev. 23:4-5).

It is contrary to Scripture to observe the Passover on the 15th day of the first month, which begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is also contrary to Scripture to claim that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 14th, as some do. They point to Scriptures such as Ezekiel 45:21, which can easily be misinterpreted as evidence of a combined feast, and ignore other Scriptures which clearly contradict their belief. If they would carefully and objectively examine all the Scriptural commands, they would find no basis whatsoever for combining the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The two feasts are separate and are to be observed on their respective days, as God commands in His Word. *For a technical exegesis of Ezekiel 45:21, see Appendix R.*

GOD DID NOT COMBINE THE PASSOVER AND THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD. It was the leaders of Judaism who changed the commandments of God and combined the two feasts, eliminating the 14th Passover and proclaiming the 15th as the Passover day, and then supporting their erroneous teaching with the empty argument of a "day's delay."

Assembling at Rameses for the Exodus

Having adopted the traditional teachings of Judaism, the advocates of a 15th Passover claim that the Passover was eaten on the night of the 15th, and that the children of Israel left their houses to begin the Exodus sometime after midnight but before dawn. This interpretation of the Scriptural account places the Passover and the Exodus in the same night, allowing no time for the children of Israel to travel to Rameses and assemble in their marching order before beginning the Exodus. The account in Exodus 12 clearly records that the children of Israel departed as an organized group from Rameses: "And the children of Israel journeyed **from Rameses**..." (Ex. 12:37).

The book of Numbers gives us a detailed account of their departure from Rameses: "These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, who went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies [showing an organized

marching order] under the hand of Moses and Aaron. And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the command of the LORD. And these *are* their journeys according to their starting places. **And they set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month.** On the *next* day after the Passover *day*, the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians, while the Egyptians were still burying all *their* firstborn whom the LORD had stricken among them. The LORD also executed judgments upon their gods. And the children of Israel set out **from Rameses**..." (Num. 33:1-5).

The Scriptures plainly show that the Exodus began from Rameses, not from the houses of the children of Israel, which were located in the land of Goshen. It required several hours of travel to gather in their marching order at Rameses in preparation for the Exodus. The Exodus began as a well-organized march, not as a scattered movement of people and flocks. It is a gross distortion of the Scriptural account to claim that the Exodus began the moment the children of Israel left their houses in the land of Goshen.

It is clearly recorded in the Passover instructions in Exodus 12 that the children of Israel were forbidden to leave their houses **until morning**. According to the Scriptural definition of "morning," which we learned in our study of Element # 6, they could not leave their houses until the **first light of dawn or sunrise**. They did not leave their houses as soon as the Lord had passed at midnight. They waited until the morning of the 14th had begun.

If the children of Israel had left their houses immediately after midnight, they would have been required to travel to Rameses in the darkness of night, since the pillar of fire did not appear until they had departed from Rameses: "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people" (Ex. 13:21-22).

Imagine the difficulties the children of Israel would have encountered if they had attempted to travel to Rameses by night with no light to guide them. Some families might have ended up in the wrong city and missed the Exodus! And how could they have kept their sheep and goats from being scattered along the way? It is no easy task to keep stragglers from wandering off during the daylight hours; it would have been an impossible task in the dark hours after midnight.

To claim that the children of Israel began the Exodus in this manner is not only illogical but totally unscriptural. The account of the Passover events in Exodus 12 makes it explicitly clear that the children of Israel remained in their houses in the land of Goshen **until the morning, or sunrise**. They did not travel to Rameses to assemble for the Exodus until the darkness of night had ended. At daybreak on the 14th, they left their houses and completed the spoiling of the Egyptians before assembling in their marching order at Rameses.

Chapter Eight

The Logistics of the Exodus

Those who support a 15th Passover deny that the logistics involved in moving the entire nation of Israel would have prevented the Exodus from taking place in the same night as the Passover. They claim, "Despite the logistics of getting such a large group underway, this could have been done since they were already prepared and knew the death angel would pass about midnight" (Robert L. Kuhn and Lester L. Grabbe, *The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 8).

It is easy for "office-bound" scholars, sitting in their armchairs, to create nonsensical scenarios of the Exodus in order to support their views. But if they truly are scholars, they should be the first to acknowledge that the Exodus was entirely a matter of logistics. It requires careful planning and organization to move a large mass of people even with modern means of transportation. But the children of Israel did not have modern transportation. They marched out on foot like an army, all their families loaded with spoiled possessions—jewels of silver, gold and clothing—and accompanied by their flocks and herds. The Scriptures record the number of adult males at about 600,000. Estimating an equal number of women and one child per adult, there could have been as many as 2,400,000 people. The Scriptures describe their departure from Rameses:

"And the children of Israel **journeyed from Rameses** to Succoth, the men being about six hundred thousand on foot, apart from little ones. And also a mixed multitude went up with them, and flocks and herds, very much livestock. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not stay, neither had they prepared any food for themselves for the journey" (Ex. 12:37-39).

The description of the Exodus in Numbers 33 shows that the assembling in Rameses was not a jumbled, mass congregation of people and animals, such as a town square gathering; rather, it was an orderly arrangement in columns. As we have read, the "hosts," or armies, of the children of Israel went forth "stage by stage" (verses 1-2). Moses and Aaron had undoubtedly instructed the children of Israel to assemble by their tribes at prearranged areas along the highway south and east of Rameses, heading toward the Red Sea. They would have organized in columns after having arrived at their designated places sometime during the daylight portion of the 14th. When all the tribes of Israel were assembled, the columns must have extended for at least ten miles in length. With their flocks and herds along each side of the highway, the columns were very wide. The children of Israel whose houses were closer to Rameses would have been the first to form the marching columns. Those whose houses were located farther from Rameses would have arrived later and would consequently have formed the ends of the columns.

When we analyze the logistics involved in organizing hundreds of thousands of people into orderly columns for a prolonged march, with all their animals and possessions, it is easy to see why God allotted the entire

daylight portion of the 14th for the preparations for the Exodus. The Scriptural account shows that the children of Israel spent the early hours of the day spoiling the Egyptians. Many more hours of the day passed as families from every part of Goshen journeyed to Rameses and formed into columns according to their marching order. When the 14th day ended at sunset, or *ba erev*, the entire nation was ready to march, and the Exodus began.

It is hard for us to comprehend the magnitude of the Exodus. It might be helpful to relate it to a modern event which involves a large mass of people. Most of us are familiar with the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena, California, having viewed at least parts of the parade on television. It is perhaps one of the closest visual and mental approximations we can use to help us grasp the enormity of the Exodus. The following information was supplied by the Office of The Tournament of Roses in Pasadena, California.

Each year there are approximately 1,000,000 people who assemble in Pasadena to watch the Rose Parade in person. They are either gathered in stands or sitting or standing on the sides of the street, which is about 80 feet wide. The parade route itself is 5.5 miles long. The parade takes two hours to pass by any set point, making the speed of the parade 2.75 miles per hour, which is the speed of the slowest walking participant and also includes the times when the entire parade completely stops for several minutes. At the beginning of the parade route, the parade starts at 8:10 AM and ends at 10:10 AM. At the end of the parade route, the parade begins at 10:10 AM and ends at 12:10 PM. In reality, the parade is four hours long, although it takes only two hours for it to pass any set point along the parade route.

The people who watch the parade are crowded rather closely together in stands or beside buildings along the parade route. It can be estimated that the 1,000,000 people who watch the parade are crowded into an area no more than 75 feet wide, on both sides of the street, along the 5.5 mile parade route. In many places, the width is less than 75 feet. The street is reserved for the parade participants, who march or ride on horses, on floats or in cars.

Those who have viewed the Rose Parade on television have some awareness of the enormous crowds of people who mass together for this event. By doubling this huge crowd in our "mind's eye," we can begin to grasp the magnitude of the Exodus. The columns that formed for the Exodus could have been as long as ten miles and quite wide because of the animals being herded along the sides of the highway. At the perimeters of the column, men were probably appointed as sentinels to keep the march organized and moving in the right direction, and to keep the herds and flocks from wandering off.

Thirty-five years ago, while writing a booklet about the Passover controversy, I contacted two specialists in military logistics who were Lieutenant Colonels at Fort Ord, California, and presented the mathematical facts concerning the Exodus. As logistics experts, they concluded that it would not have been possible for the children of Israel to leave their homes after midnight and immediately begin the Exodus. To assemble and move

an entire nation of hundreds of thousands of people at one time required expert planning by a master of logistics.

Israel's departure from Egypt was planned by the Supreme Master of Logistics—God was in charge! Moreover, God's servant Moses, who had been Pharaoh's heir apparent and general over the Egyptian armies, was trained in military logistics and organization many years before God called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

In view of the number of people and the distances involved, the two military specialists concluded that the assembling for the Exodus could have been completed within the daylight portion of the 14th, which is the Scriptural time frame. Their standard for calculating the required time was the rate at which a trained army can move on foot. Allowing a ten-minute break every hour, an army can travel at the rate of 2 to 2.5 miles per hour. Refugees, as the children of Israel would be considered, normally travel at a much slower rate, perhaps 1.5 miles per hour. However, since the Egyptians were urging them to leave in haste, it would be reasonable to estimate their rate of travel at a minimum of 2 miles per hour.

The Scriptural account clearly shows that the children of Israel did not leave their houses until morning. Our study of Element # 6 has demonstrated that "morning" in Scripture begins with the first light of dawn. This places the time of leaving their houses at about five o'clock in the morning. Traveling at a rate of about 2 miles per hour, those who lived the farthest from Rameses would have arrived at their designated assembly areas by late afternoon of the 14th, only a short time before the Exodus would begin. Those who arrived earlier would have had additional time to eat and rest before beginning the long journey out of Egypt. When we understand that the entire daylight portion of the 14th was spent in assembling and preparing for the Exodus, we can see the utter falseness in the claim of a "day's delay." Those who support this false notion are ignoring the plain facts of Scripture!

When the sun began to set, ending the 14th, and beginning the 15th, the children of Israel were all ready to begin the Exodus. Estimating the total length of the marching columns at approximately ten miles and the rate of travel at about 2 miles per hour, it would have taken approximately five hours for the last of the children of Israel to leave Rameses. The first column would have begun to march out at about 6 PM, as the sun was setting, and the end of the last column would have left the city at about eleven o'clock on the night of the 15th.

The Timing of the Exodus

The account of Israel's departure from Rameses shows that the Exodus was planned by God long in advance. Notice the use of the phrase "the very same day" to emphasize this fact:

"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, the men being about six hundred thousand on foot, apart from little ones. And also a mixed multitude went up with them, and flocks and herds, very much

livestock. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not stay, neither had they prepared any food for themselves for the journey. Now the sojourning of the children of Israel in Egypt *was* four hundred and thirty years....even on that **same day, all the armies** of the LORD went out [assembled and marching like an army] from the land of Egypt. It *is* a night to be much observed to the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. **This *is* that night of the LORD to be observed** [the night they departed from Rameses, not the night of the passing over] by all the children of Israel in their generations..." (Ex. 12:37-42).

Verse 17 clearly identifies the day of the Exodus—the "very same day"—as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "And you shall keep the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread, for in this **same day** I have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt."

There is no question concerning the day of Israel's departure from Rameses. The account in Exodus 12 reveals that the children of Israel left Rameses on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the 15th day of the first month—and this fact is confirmed in Numbers 33:3. We know that they did not wait until the morning of the 15th, as Exodus 12 records that they departed by night. In Verse 42, that night is called "a **night to be much observed** unto the LORD for all the children of Israel **throughout their generations**"—showing that it was to be observed year by year as a memorial of the Exodus.

The Scriptures make it absolutely clear that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was ordained to commemorate the act of God in "**bringing them out from the land of Egypt**." This feast day—the 15th day of the first month—does not commemorate the act of God in **passing over their houses** before they left Egypt. The passing over did not occur in the same day as the Exodus and should not be observed on the night that commemorates the Exodus.

Those who make the mistake of combining the Passover with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread have lost sight of the special meaning that God has designated for each of these feasts. God Himself appointed the 14th day of the first month as the Passover day, and the 15th as the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The 14th and 15th days of the first month played a significant role in the plan of God from the earliest times—long before Israel's first Passover and the Exodus from Egypt. As the account in Exodus 12 shows, the children of Israel departed from Rameses exactly 430 years from the day that God established His covenant with their forefather Abraham:

"And it came to pass at the end of the **four hundred and thirty years**, it was **even on that very same day**, all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It *is* a night to be much observed to the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This *is* that night of the LORD to be observed by all the children of Israel in their generations" (verses 41-42).

Four hundred and thirty years before the Exodus, on the "**very same day**," God made a covenant with Abraham, which included a promise to bring his descendants out of bondage and bestow on them great wealth: "And He said to Abram, 'You must surely know that your seed shall be sojourners in a land *that is* not theirs, (and shall serve them and afflict them) four hundred years. And also I will judge that nation whom they shall serve. And **afterward they shall come out with great substance**" (Gen. 15:13-14).

God fulfilled His promise to Abraham when Israel departed from Rameses on the "**very same day**" 430 years later with great substance. They marched out of Rameses as the 15th day of the first month was beginning at sunset. That is why God designated the night of the 15th as a memorial for all generations to come: "...This is that night of **the LORD to be observed** by all the children of Israel in their generations" (Ex. 12:42).

Some who combine the events of the Passover and the Exodus claim that the children of Israel were watching for the destroyer of the firstborn on that night. But that is not what the Scriptures say! The account in Exodus 12 proclaims the night of the 15th as "a night to be much observed to the LORD **for bringing them out from the land of Egypt**..." (verse 42). It is "a night to be much observed to the LORD," because it was the night when God Himself was personally watching over them, protecting them and leading them out of the land of Egypt:

"And the LORD went before them [God Himself leading] by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people" (Ex. 13:21-22).

When Pharaoh with his soldiers and chariots pursued the children of Israel, God supernaturally protected them. God was watching over them from the cloud. Here is what God did to shield and protect them from their enemies, when they were trapped by the Red Sea: "And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved. And he went to the rear of them. And the pillar of the cloud went from in front of them and it stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptian and the camp of Israel. It was a cloud of darkness *to one*, [on the Egyptian side of the cloud], but gave light by night *to the other* [on the Israelite side of the cloud], so that the *two* did not come near one another all night" (Ex. 14:19-20).

That night God separated the waters of the Red Sea and completely dried the seabed so that the children of Israel could cross to the other side. After they had safely crossed the Red Sea, God again protected them by disabling the Egyptians' chariots: "And in the morning watch it came to pass that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and the army of the Egyptians was thrown into confusion. And He loosened their chariot wheels, and made them go heavily, so that the Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians' " (verses 24-25).

All these events bear testimony to God's miraculous protection of the children of Israel from the time that He led them forth from Rameses on the night of the 15th day of the first month, which began the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is proper and right to celebrate this night to commemorate what God did in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. Some have condemned the observance of this night, claiming that such an observance is an invention of men. But the commemoration of this special night did not originate in the minds of men! God commands us to observe this night. It is the beginning of God's proclaimed holy day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is "a night to be much observed," because on that night God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt.

The Scriptures clearly record that the Exodus began at the going down of the sun, and continued on into the night: "...the LORD your God brought you forth **out of Egypt BY NIGHT.... at sunset [*ba erev*, the beginning of the 15th], at the going *down* of the sun, at the time that you came out of Egypt**" (Deut. 16:1, 6). *For a technical exegesis of Deuteronomy 16:6, see Appendix N.*

As these verses show, the children of Israel began leaving Rameses as the sun was setting, ending the 14th day of the first month. But they did not complete their departure until long after the darkness of night had come—the night of the 15th! THEY DEPARTED FROM EGYPT BY NIGHT! Based on the logistics of the Exodus, we have estimated that it was about eleven o'clock at night when the last of the children of Israel departed from Rameses.

Their Exodus from Egypt began on the night of the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was not the same night that the Lord killed the Egyptian firstborn and passed over the houses of the children of Israel, as the Scriptures record: "And they set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. **On the next day after the Passover *day,*** the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians, while the Egyptians were still burying all *their* firstborn whom the LORD had stricken among them. The LORD also executed judgments upon their gods" (Num. 33:3-4). *For a technical exegesis of Numbers 33:3, see Appendix M.*

Verse 3 specifically states that the children of Israel departed from Rameses on the 15th day of the first month. Nothing could be more plain! As we have seen, Deuteronomy 16 shows that their departure began at sunset and continued late into the night of the 15th.

The account in Numbers 33 also records that when the children of Israel departed, the Egyptians were burying their dead. If the children of Israel had kept the Passover at Rameses that same night, as the proponents of a 15th Passover declare, the Egyptians would have been burying their dead only minutes after God had struck them dead. They would have been outside digging graves in the dark hours after midnight! Such action would have been unthinkable if that had been the night in which the plague had struck, bringing death and terror to every Egyptian household.

The Scriptural record of the burial of the Egyptian firstborn clearly contradicts the claim that the Exodus began shortly after midnight. The Egyptians would obviously not have begun to bury their dead in the darkness of night, long before sunrise. Once again, error does not agree with Scripture!

Although the Egyptians began to bury their firstborn on the morning of the Passover day, the burials had not been completed when the Exodus began at sunset. It is difficult to estimate how many Egyptian firstborn died in the plague because we have no historical record of the population of Egypt. The only record the Scriptures give is the number of Israelite men, which was 600,000. Based on that figure, we have estimated the total number of the children of Israel to be approximately 2,400,000. If the ratio to the population of Egypt was one Israelite for every ten Egyptians, there would have been a total population of 24,000,000 Egyptians. On the average, the percentage of firstborn in a population normally runs about 20 per cent. Multiplying the population of Egypt by this percentage, the number of firstborn at that time would have been about 4,800,000! Think of it—4,800,000, the pride of Egypt, dying violent, excruciating deaths!

EGYPT WAS A NATION TRULY WASTED AND DESTROYED BY GOD. THEIR FIRSTBORN KILLED! THEIR LAND DESTROYED! CROPS UTTERLY WASTED! ANIMAL POPULATION DECIMATED! AND IN THE END, THEIR WEALTH GONE!

The God of Israel had stretched out His mighty arm and executed His judgments against the Egyptians and their false gods. The gods of Egypt were worthless and powerless in the face of the true God! They could not protect the cattle of Egypt from the plague of murrain. They could not deliver the people of Egypt from the grievous plague of boils and the terrifying plague of darkness. They could not protect the land of Egypt from the devastating plagues of hail and locusts, nor keep the waters of Egypt from turning to blood. And worst of all, they could not prevent the plague that robbed Egypt of her firstborn—her pride and strength.

The Lord had not only delivered His people from their bondage, but had utterly vanquished the nation that had oppressed them. Led by their all-powerful God, the children of Israel departed in triumph and great victory. The Scriptures record that "**the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians**" (Num. 33:3).

Exodus 13 Confirms that the Feast of Unleavened Bread Commemorates the Exodus

As Numbers 33 records, it was "on the 15th day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover" that the Exodus began with Israel's triumphant march out of Rameses (verse 3, JPSA). On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, beginning at sunset and continuing on into the night, God brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. The account in Exodus 12 calls that night "a night to be much observed to the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt" (verse 42).

As the children of Israel prepared to begin the Exodus on the 15th day of the first month, Moses gave these instructions to them: "**Remember this day *in* which you came out of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage; for the LORD brought you out from this place by the strength of His hand. There shall be no leavened bread eaten. On this day [the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the 15th day of the first month] you are going out, in the month Abib" (Ex. 13:3-4).

The following verses in Exodus 13 record God's command to them to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread each year as a memorial of their Exodus from Egypt: "And it shall be when the LORD shall bring you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that **you shall keep this service in this month**. You shall eat unleavened bread seven days, and in the seventh day there *shall be* a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with you, nor shall there be leaven seen with you in all thy borders.

"And **you shall tell your son** in that day, saying, 'This is because of that what the **LORD did for me when I came out from Egypt**. And it shall be a sign to you upon your hand, and for a **memorial** between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth, **for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt**. You shall therefore keep this law in its season from year to year" (Ex. 13:5-10).

This passage in Exodus 13 plainly shows that the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates the Exodus, when God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with a strong hand and mighty power: "**Remember this day *in* which you came out of Egypt....On this day you are going out....shall keep this service in this month....Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days....tell your son in that day...This is because of what the LORD did for me WHEN I CAME OUT OF EGYPT....a sign...a memorial...with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt....keep this law in its season from year to year**" (verses 3-10).

Could anything be clearer than these commands? It is explicitly stated in these verses that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to be observed for seven days as a memorial commemorating the Exodus. Israel's journey out of Egypt lasted the entire seven days of this feast. The children of Israel began the Exodus when they departed from Rameses on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and on the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread they ended their march out of Egypt by crossing the Red Sea! On the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, God completed the deliverance of his people from their Egyptian oppressors:

"But the children of Israel walked upon dry land through the middle of the sea. And the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. So **the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians**....And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians. And the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:29-31).

The miracle of God's deliverance at the Red Sea has great significance for Christians today. As God completely delivered the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, so He now delivers His people from bondage to sin. Since leaven is used in Scripture to represent sin and error, living in an unleavened condition symbolizes living in a state of righteousness before God. That is the spiritual lesson which the Feast of Unleavened Bread teaches. Is it any wonder that God commands His people to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as well as the Passover? Each of these feasts has it own special meaning, and each is to be observed at the time appointed by God.

When we compare what the Scriptures reveal about the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it is clear that they were instituted as separate feasts to commemorate two different events:

The Passover: "And it will be, when your children shall say to you, 'What *does* this service *mean* to you? Then you shall say, 'It *is* the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses" (Ex. 12:26-27).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread: "And you shall keep the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread; **for in this very same day** [the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] **I have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt**....And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, it was even on **the very same day, all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt**. It *is* a night to be much observed to the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This *is* that night of the LORD....**Remember this day, *in* which you came out of Egypt**....On this day you are going out....you shall keep this service in this month. You shall eat unleavened bread seven days" (Ex. 12:17, 41-42; Ex. 13:3-6).

The Passover was instituted as a one-day service, a memorial of God's passing over their houses in Egypt, to be observed on the 14th day of the first month. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was instituted as a seven-day observance, beginning on the 15th day of the first month. The first day of Unleavened Bread commemorates the beginning of the Exodus, and the seventh day commemorates the completion of the Exodus out of Egypt with the total destruction of the enemy at the Red Sea.

We have studied every aspect of the Exodus, and we have seen that the Scriptures do not support the claim that the Passover was observed on the night of the 15th, which was the night that the Exodus began. The Scriptural accounts clearly separate the Passover day from the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As we will see, the observance of a 15th Passover developed hundreds of years after Israel left Egypt, when the domestic sacrifice of the lambs was changed to a temple sacrifice. In the next chapter, we will examine the Scriptures to learn whether the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs was commanded by God.

CHAPTER NINE

DID GOD ALTER HIS COMMANDS FOR THE PASSOVER?

In our study of the Passover account in the book of Exodus, we found no evidence to support the Jewish tradition of a late afternoon temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. To the contrary, we found that all the Scriptural evidence points to a Passover at the beginning of the 14th. By letting the Scriptures define "morning" and "night," we have determined that the children of Israel killed the Passover lambs on the 14th as the day began. As the Scriptural account shows, the lambs were killed at the houses of the children of Israel, which were located in the land of Goshen. The domestic sacrifice of the Passover, as observed in Egypt, was established as a lasting ordinance for the children of Israel:

"And this day [the Passover day] shall be a memorial to you. And you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast **as a law forever**" (Ex 12:14).

The instructions that God delivered for Israel's first Passover were to be observed by all generations that would follow. In our study of the Scriptural account, we found no indication whatsoever that future Passovers were to be observed any differently from the instructions that are recorded in Exodus 12. God's command to keep the Passover "**by an ordinance forever**" included the observance of all the instructions that were delivered to the children of Israel by Moses:

"In the fourteenth day of this month, between the two evenings, you shall keep it in its appointed time. You shall keep it **according to all its statutes**, **and according to all the ceremonies** of it" (Num. 9:3).

Despite this command, some proponents of a 15th Passover claim that the Passover in Egypt was the only domestically killed Passover observed by the children of Israel. They maintain that from the time of the second Passover, when the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, the blood of the Passover lambs had to be sprinkled at the base of the altar of burnt offerings, as required for all other sacrifices. As Kuhn and Grabbe state, "Later Passovers were kept somewhat differently from the one in Egypt. The blood of the lambs had to be sprinkled on the altar (2 Chron. 30:16; 35:11)" (*The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today*, p. 12). Based on this supposition, they claim that God instituted a change in the observance of the Passover and maintain that a late afternoon sacrifice of the lambs is supported by Scripture.

The Scriptural references that they use to support their claim are describing Passover observances which took place in the days of King Hezekiah and King Josiah—approximately 800 years after the Passover in Egypt. Ignoring earlier Scriptural records of Passover observances before the days

of Hezekiah and Josiah, they make a creative leap of 800 years and imply that all Passover sacrifices after the Passover in Egypt required the assistance of the priests and the sprinkling of the blood on the altar. (In Chapters Twelve and Thirteen of this book, we will examine the account of Hezekiah's Passover as recorded in II Chronicles 30 and Josiah's Passover in II Chronicles 35.)

Is there any Biblical evidence that God altered the Passover ordinances that He had given to Moses? Did God Himself end the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs? After Israel's first Passover, did He institute a mandatory tabernacle sacrifice of the Passover lambs? Did God require that the blood of the Passover lambs be sprinkled on the altar, as these scholars claim?

In this chapter, we will examine the Scriptural commands for the sacrifices that were offered at the tabernacle, and we will see that God did not institute a Passover sacrifice at the tabernacle. The change that took place in the observance of the Passover in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah was not commanded by God!

SUMMARY OF THE ORDINANCES AND STATUTES OF THE PASSOVER

Let us begin our study by reviewing the statutes and ordinances of the Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12:

1) Select an unblemished male lamb on the 10th day of the first month (Ex. 12:3).
2) Kill the lamb at each house between sunset and dark (Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*) at the beginning of the 14th. Share the lamb with a neighbor if one's own family was too small to eat it (Ex. 12:4, 6).
3) Strike the side posts and lintel of the door of each house with some of the blood (Ex. 12:7).
4) Eat the flesh in that night (Ex. 12:8).
5) Roast the whole lamb—head and legs and edible entrails—with fire, and eat it with bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8).
6) Do not boil the meat with water or eat it raw (Ex. 12:9).
7) Burn any remains, including the skin and guts, by morning (Ex.12:10).
8) Allow no alien to eat it unless circumcised (Ex. 12:43-44).
9) Eat the lamb in the same house where it was slain. Do not carry any of it out of the house. Do not break a bone of the lamb (Ex. 12:46).

These ordinances for the Passover differ greatly from God's instructions for the sacrifices that were offered at the tabernacle in the wilderness and later at the temple. We find God's commands for those sacrifices in Exodus 29 and 30. These chapters contain instructions for every type of sacrifice that was offered at the tabernacle. The same commands applied to all the sacrifices that were offered at the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem 500 years after the Exodus.

The Tabernacle/Temple Sacrifices as Commanded by God

Prior to the institution of God's covenant with Israel, known as the Old Covenant, it was the patriarchs of each family, such as Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job, who offered burnt offerings and sin offerings to God. They were, in effect, acting as priests for their families and clans. When the Old Covenant was established, this patriarchal function was assigned to the sons of Aaron and their fellow Levites. The sacrificial system of the Levitical priesthood was instituted when the tabernacle was built in the year after the Exodus. The purpose of this chapter is to examine God's instructions for the sacrifices that He required at the tabernacle.

The commands for these sacrifices were given by God at the same time that He gave the instructions for building the tabernacle. The first sacrifices that are listed in Exodus 29 are the sin-offering (verse 14), the burnt-offering (verse 18), the wave-offering (verse 24), and the heave-offering (verse 28). The commands for the daily burnt offerings, called the morning and evening offerings, are given in Verses 38-39:

"And this *is* what you shall offer upon the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. The one lamb you shall offer at sunrise [Hebrew *boqer*, the dawn of day], and the other lamb you shall offer between the two evenings [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, between sunset and dark]."

The use of the Hebrew terms *boqer* and *ben ha arbayim* pinpoints the exact time for offering the two daily sacrifices. As we have seen, these same Hebrew terms are used in the Passover account in Exodus 12. In our study of Element # 6, we learned that "morning," or *boqer*, begins when the sun rises, and *ben ha arbayim*—"between the setting-times" or "between the two evenings"—begins when the sun has set.

In accordance with God's command, the morning offering was originally offered at sunrise, when the morning begins, and the evening offering was originally offered between sunset and dark. Every day of the year, there was an offering at the beginning of daylight and at the beginning of darkness. Later records of the temple service show that a change was instituted in the time of the evening offering. Instead of an offering immediately after sunset, as God had commanded, the offering was moved to the late afternoon.

The advocates of a 15th Passover claim that from the beginning, the evening offering was made in the late afternoon, which is their view of *ben ha arbayim*. They argue that the Scriptural command shows a morning-evening sequence of the two daily offerings, which means that the evening offering was made before the day ended at sunset. This interpretation of the Scriptural command, which is also recorded in Numbers 28:4, is frequently used to promote the definition of *ben ha arbayim* as the afternoon hours of the day. Some have been persuaded to accept this false definition of *ben ha*

arbayim because the English translation of God's command for the daily offerings appears to support this view. However, a careful examination of the Hebrew text exposes the fallacy in this interpretation.

The structure of the Hebrew text reveals that the two daily offerings are **not listed in chronological order**, as the advocates of a 15th Passover have assumed. The word "and," which links the two offerings, is translated from the Hebrew *waw*. This Hebrew conjunction is used numerous times in Scripture to link objects or events.

Events that are linked by the Hebrew *waw* are generally listed in chronological order, as one would expect. But the Scriptures do not always list events according to their chronological sequence. Whether or not two events are listed chronologically is revealed by the manner in which the *waw* is used in the Hebrew text. When events are **not** listed in chronological order, the rules of Biblical Hebrew require a specific structure of the text. An examination of Exodus 29:39 and Numbers 28:4 in the Hebrew text shows that these verses fit all the requirements for listing events **out of chronological order**. Thus the Hebrew text leaves no room to assume that the morning and evening offerings are listed chronologically, as the advocates of a 15th Passover have claimed. *For a detailed analysis of the Hebrew text, see Appendix L.*

After the daily burnt offerings, two additional offerings are given in Exodus 29: the meal offering, or flour offering (translated "meat offering" in the *KJV*) (verse 40), and the wine offering, or drink offering (verse 41). The following chapter records that an incense offering of sweet spices was to be burnt on the altar of incense at the same times of day that were appointed for the morning and evening offering (Ex. 30:7-8).

The various types of sacrifices that God required at the tabernacle are only briefly described in Exodus 29 and 30. Detailed instructions for each sacrifice can be found in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. Nowhere in these chapters is there a single reference to a Passover sacrifice at the tabernacle.

If God had changed the Passover from a domestic observance to a tabernacle sacrifice, surely the Scriptures would record such an important command. Let us do as the Bereans, and search the Scriptures. Let us see if a command for the Passover was included in God's instructions for the tabernacle.

We will first examine God's instructions for setting up and consecrating the tabernacle, which will give us the exact chronological setting. These events are recorded in Exodus 40. As the account shows, the entire tabernacle was set up with its furniture, all the holy things were anointed and consecrated, and Aaron and his sons were consecrated for God's service on the first day of the first month in the second year in the wilderness (verses 1-17). That was only two weeks before the children of Israel would observe the Passover—their first Passover after the Exodus from Egypt:

"And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was set up" (Ex. 40:17).

When the tabernacle and all its furnishings were anointed and made holy, and Aaron and his sons were consecrated and ready, a great and fantastic event occurred. God put His presence and glory in the tabernacle!

"....And Moses finished the work. And the cloud covered the tabernacle of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tabernacle of the congregation because the cloud stayed on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:33-35).

What a fantastic sight that must have been! God was dwelling in the tabernacle, in the midst of His people. As He had told Moses when He gave him the instructions for building the tabernacle, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, so **that I may dwell among them**" (Ex. 25:8).

DEDICATION OF THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS

Following the momentous event of God's coming to dwell in the tabernacle, the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel each brought an offering: "And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it and sanctified it, and all the vessels of it, both the altar and all its vessels, and had anointed them and sanctified them, and the leaders of Israel offered, the head men of their fathers' house..." (Num. 7:1-2, *JPSA*).

These offerings began a twelve-day ceremony for the dedication of the altar: "And the leaders offered for the dedication of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the leaders offered their offering before the altar. And the LORD said to Moses, 'They shall offer their offering, each leader on his day, for the dedication of the altar' " (Num. 7:10-11).

Beginning with the first day of the first month of the second year, each prince brought a special offering for the dedication of the altar. The twelve princes, as representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel, presented exactly the same offering, each on his own specified day of offering. On the first day of the first month, the prince of Judah gave his offering (Num. 7:12); on the second day, the prince of Issachar (verse 18); on the third day, the prince of Zebulun (verse 24). The offerings continued for a total of twelve days, ending with the offering of the prince of Naphtali on the twelfth day (verse 78).

"....This *was* the dedication of the altar after it was anointed" (Num. 7:88).

On the last day, the twelfth day of the dedication offerings, those Levites who were not of the house of Aaron were dedicated to the Lord for the service of the tabernacle: "And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation. And you shall gather the whole assembly of the

children of Israel together. And you shall bring the Levites before the LORD. And the children of Israel shall lay their hands upon the Levites. And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD *for* an offering on behalf of the children of Israel, so that they may do the service of the LORD....So you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel. And the Levites shall be Mine. And after that the Levites shall go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation....And Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel did to the Levites according to all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites. So the children of Israel did to them. And the Levites purified themselves, and they washed their clothes. And Aaron offered them as a wave offering before the LORD. Then Aaron made an atonement for them to purify them. And after that the Levites went in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron and before his sons. Even as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them" (Num. 8:9-11, 14-15, 20-22).

On the twelfth day of the first month of the second year, the tabernacle was wholly operational for the offering of sacrifices for all the children of Israel. The priests of the house of Aaron and the Levites, their helpers, were all fully consecrated and ready to do the work of the tabernacle. Only two days later, the Passover was to be observed.

The tabernacle with its newly dedicated altar was officially ready for use in time for Israel's second Passover. It would have been easy to change the domestic Passover to a tabernacle sacrifice, since the tents of the children of Israel were pitched all around the tabernacle. This was a most opportune time for God to change the ordinance concerning the time and location for killing the Passover lambs. Had God done so at this time, there would never have been any question that He had instituted such a change. Let us examine the account of the second Passover to see if we can find any Scriptural evidence of a change from the Passover ordinances that are recorded in Exodus 12.

The Passover of the Second Year

The account of Israel's second Passover, which was kept in the wilderness in the year following the Exodus, is found in Numbers 9. Remember, this Passover was observed two days after the dedication of the tabernacle and the altar. What did God command the children of Israel to do for the second Passover? The answer is clearly recorded in the Scriptural account:

"And the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 'Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at its appointed time. In the fourteenth day of this month, between the two evenings [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, between sunset and dark], you shall keep it in its appointed time. **You shall keep it according to all its statutes, and according to all the ceremonies of it**.'

"And Moses spoke to the children of Israel to keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month between

the two evenings [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, between sunset and dark] in the wilderness of Sinai. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, the children of Israel did" (Num. 9:1-5).

The Scriptural record of Israel's second Passover shows **no change** in the time or the manner of its observance. The children of Israel followed all the ordinances and statutes that were established at the first Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12. There is no indication that God added to, or eliminated, or altered any of the ordinances and statutes that were observed at the Passover in Egypt. WE DO NOT FIND ANY CHANGE WHATSOEVER!

Since the children of Israel were commanded to keep the Passover according to **all** the statutes and **all** the ordinances that God had originally commanded, we know that they killed the lambs at their individual tents. They did not take their lambs to the tabernacle for the Levites to slay and the priests to sprinkle some of the blood on the altar. They observed the Passover exactly as God had commanded in Exodus 12. What a Passover that must have been! In tents throughout the camp of Israel, the heads of households were relating the story of that perilous night in Egypt when the Lord passed over their houses, sparing their firstborn.

It is clear that God did not institute any changes in the ordinances of the Passover at the time of the second observance. However, a problem arose at that time which required a special judgment by God. There were some Israelites who had touched a dead body and were unclean, and therefore were unable to observe the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. Here is God's judgment in this matter: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying, "If any man of you or of your generations shall be unclean because of a dead body, or in a journey afar off, he shall still keep the Passover to the LORD. They shall keep it the fourteenth day of the second month between the two evenings [Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, between sunset and dark], eating it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*. They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any bone of it. A**ccording to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it**. But the man that *is* clean, and is not on a journey, and holds back from keeping the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he did not bring the offering of the LORD at its appointed time, that man shall bear his sin. And if a stranger shall live among you, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, he shall do **according to the law of the Passover, and according to its ordinance.** You shall have *only* one law, both for the stranger and for him that was born in the land' " (Num. 9:9-14).

This judgment was a special provision for those who were unclean by reason of a dead body or were on a journey outside the land, and who consequently were unable to keep the Passover at its appointed time. Although God made provision for them to keep the Passover on an alternate date, He did not change the manner in which they were to observe the Passover. God's commands to Moses in the above verses show that they were to keep all the statutes and all the ordinances that were established at the Passover in Egypt.

No changes were instituted by God in the Passover that the children of Israel observed in the second year. The Scriptural account makes it clear that **all the ordinances and statutes of the first Passover were still in effect.** The children of Israel carried out all the instructions and commands that are recorded in Exodus 12 when they kept the second Passover in the wilderness of Sinai.

The fact that the children of Israel did not observe the Passover at the tabernacle is confirmed by *The Encyclopedia Judaica*: "Originally the Passover was celebrated among the families (Ex. 12:21 [J]) in tents, after the territorial occupation [it was celebrated], in houses" (Vol. 13, p. 170). This authoritative source confirms that the children of Israel observed the Passover "in tents" before they occupied the land of Canaan and built houses. From the time that they left the land of Egypt until the end of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel observed the Passover in tents. After they occupied the Promised Land, the Passover was observed in their houses.

The Karaites, who belonged to the Levitical community that strictly followed the Scriptures, also testify that during the forty years of wandering the children of Israel observed the Passover according to the ordinances that God had instituted in Egypt: "If one should ask about the generation of the wilderness, whether or not they performed the Passover during the forty years of their sojourn in the wilderness, the answer is this: in the second year after the Exodus **they performed it according to its rules** and ate unleavened bread as it is written: 'And they kept the passover in the first month, **on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight**, in the wilderness of Sinai' (Num 9:5); this is **in conformity with God's command to them: 'according to all its ordinances and all its statutes shall ye keep it**' (Num. 9:3). As for the remaining years of their sojourn in the wilderness, all those who were themselves circumcised and had no uncircumcised person in their possession did not fail to perform the Passover. This is demonstrated by the praise bestowed by the Prophet Moses upon those who were about to enter the Land of Palestine, as it is written concerning them: 'And ye who did cleave unto the Lord your God' (Deut. 4:4); he could not possibly have praised them had they neglected to observe this important ordinance in the absence of any legal hindrance. Had they been so neglectful, Scripture would have branded them with reproof, yet we do not find [this] to be the case" (Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, pp. 205-206, emphasis added).

These historical records confirm that the domestic Passover was observed during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. There is no record whatsoever of a tabernacle-centered Passover during this time period, neither in Scripture nor in the historical writings of the Jews.

The Commanded Times for Tabernacle Sacrifices

God's commands for the tabernacle required that different types of sacrifices be offered at specific times. There were sacrifices for every day of the week, every weekly Sabbath, every new moon, and every annual Sabbath or high day. The commands for these sacrifices are found in Numbers 28 and 29.

Numbers 28 begins with God's instructions for the two daily offerings and includes instructions for the meal and drink offerings which accompanied these burnt offerings (verses 1-8). In addition to the two daily offerings, on every weekly Sabbath there was an offering of two he-lambs (verses 9-10). On the new moons, the beginning of each month, there was an additional offering of two young bullocks, seven he-lambs of the first year with their meal and drink offerings, and one he-goat for a sin offering (verses 11-15).

Sacrifices on each annual Sabbath, or holy day, were also required in addition to the daily offerings. Instructions for these feast offerings are given in the following order:

1) The seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Num. 28:17-25).
2) The Feast of Firstfruits, or Pentecost (Num. 28:26-31).
3) The Feast of Trumpets, the first day of the seventh month (Num. 29:1-6).
4) The Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, in addition to the special sacrifices that are recorded in Leviticus 16, which were performed by the high priest (Num. 29:7-11).
5) The Feast of Tabernacles, the 15th-21st of the seventh month, on each of the seven days. Thirteen bullocks were offered on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the number decreased each day through the seventh day (Num. 29:12-34).
6) The Last Great Day, the 22nd day of the seventh month, immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. 29:35-38).

This completes the list of sacrifices that were required to be offered at the tabernacle. **Notice that no instructions for the Passover sacrifice are listed among these sacrifices**. Nowhere in Numbers 28 or 29 do we find any mention of a Passover sacrifice at the tabernacle. Since these chapters list the sacrifices that were offered at the tabernacle on every day of the year, every weekly Sabbath, every new moon, and every annual feast day, it is reasonable to expect that if a Passover sacrifice was required at the tabernacle, instructions for this sacrifice would also be included. Although Numbers 28 makes reference to the Passover day, we find no instructions for a sacrifice at the tabernacle. The verse simply states, "And in the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the Passover of the LORD" (Num. 28:16).

THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT COMMAND A PASSOVER SACRIFICE AT THE TABERNACLE. This verse states only that the Passover is to be observed on the 14th day of the first month. The fact that no Passover sacrifice is included in God's instructions for the tabernacle sacrifices leaves only one logical conclusion: GOD DID NOT REQUIRE THAT THE PASSOVER LAMBS BE SACRIFICED AT THE TABERNACLE.

There is not a single word in Numbers 28 concerning a Passover sacrifice at the tabernacle. The Hebrew word for "sacrifice" is not used

in Numbers 28:16, which is the only verse that speaks of the Passover. The Hebrew word for a "peace-offering," *zebah*, is not found in Numbers 28:16. The Hebrew word for "burnt-offering," *olah*, which is used in Verse 6, is not found in Verse 16. The Hebrew word for "offering" in general, *qarob*, used in Verse 2, is not found in Verse 16. There is nothing whatsoever in the Hebrew text to indicate that a sacrifice or offering of any kind was required at the tabernacle for the Passover. The only sacrifices offered on that day were the morning and evening sacrifices, which were commanded for every day in the year.

Unfortunately, in some modern translations of Numbers 28:16, the word "sacrifice" has been inserted after the word "Passover." Such translations give the impression that the Passover lambs were to be sacrificed at the tabernacle. The new JPS translation, *TANAKH—The Holy Scriptures*, incorrectly translates Numbers 28:16 in this manner: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, there shall be a passover **sacrifice** to the Lord."

Of the five Jewish translations that were examined by the author, this translation is the only one which blatantly inserts the word "**sacrifice**" in the verse, despite the fact that **this word is not in the Hebrew text**. This erroneous translation is completely misleading to those who are seeking the truth concerning the Passover, especially those who rely on study aids and reference works to help them understand the Scriptures. Even Rabbi Kaplan, who erroneously translated *ben ha arbayim* as "afternoon," does not misrepresent the meaning of Numbers 28:16 in his translation.

The Jewish Publication Society of America, which in 1988 published *TANAKH—The Holy Scriptures*—The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text, is better known for its earlier translation of the Hebrew text, titled The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text. This earlier work was published in two editions; the first edition was copyrighted in 1917 and the second in 1955. The 1955 edition, which is used in this book, is referenced as JPSA. In both the 1917 and 1955 editions, Numbers 28:16 has been translated in the following manner: "**And in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, is the LORD's passover**."

The wording of this verse in *TANAKH—The Holy Scriptures*, the most recent JPSA translation, is a major deviation from the Hebrew text. Such an obvious discrepancy raises questions about the reliability of this latest translation. It is disturbing to find obvious mistranslations of the Scriptures when comparing an older translation with a newer one. When such changes concern the Passover, the motive is evident. It is clearly an attempt to make it appear that the Hebrew text supports the traditional beliefs of Judaism. The translators have added the word "sacrifice" in Numbers 28:16 because they are unwilling to admit that **no Passover sacrifices were required at the tabernacle**. Such an admission would undermine the Jewish tradition of a 15th Passover. To uphold their traditional belief, they deliberately inserted the word "sacrifice" in Numbers 28:16 when translating the Hebrew text.

The true meaning of Numbers 28:16 is this: **God did not require that any sacrificing be performed at the tabernacle for the Passover.**

Nowhere in the Scriptural accounts is there a single command to sacrifice the Passover lambs at the tabernacle. *(Please note: Deuteronomy 16, which some have applied to the sacrificing of Passover lambs at the tabernacle/temple, will be thoroughly studied and analyzed in Chapter Fourteen.*)

If God had changed the ordinances of the Passover when the tabernacle was set up, we would surely find evidence of such a change in the Scriptural accounts in Numbers 9 and Numbers 28. But when we examine these accounts, we find not one shred of evidence that God changed any of His instructions for the Passover as recorded in Exodus 12. There is not one word in Numbers 9 to indicate that the children of Israel offered any Passover lambs at the tabernacle in the second year, the year that the tabernacle was set up. That would have been the most convenient and appropriate time to make such a change. After all, the people were camping all around the tabernacle and were within walking distance to the tabernacle. All the priests and Levites were ready to perform their duties as commanded by God, and the tabernacle was in full operation. But God did not command that any sacrifices for the Passover be offered at the tabernacle at that time. Furthermore, no Passover sacrifice is listed in Numbers 28 and 29, although this section of Scripture enumerates all the sacrifices that God required for the tabernacle service.

The Scriptures that we have studied make it very clear that the Passover sacrifice did not become part of the tabernacle service. The Passover continued to be observed as a domestic sacrifice, according to the ordinances and statutes that God had given to Israel in Egypt. At the time of the second Passover, God commanded the children of Israel to keep these ordinances and statutes of the Passover throughout all generations.

Nowhere have we found any evidence that God changed the Passover in the Scriptures that we have studied thus far. Furthermore, when we examine Deuteronomy 16, we will see that what some have interpreted as commands for the Passover are in reality commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These commands do not pertain to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs, as some have assumed. The account of the sacrificing of the lambs in Exodus 12 makes it quite clear that the Passover was a domestic observance. Let's review the Scriptural account:

"And you [referring to each head of household] shall observe this thing as a law to you and to your children [descendants] forever [this ordinance was not to be changed]. And it shall be **when you have come to the land** which the LORD will give you, according as He has promised that you [the heads of households] **shall keep this service** [including killing the lambs at their houses]. And it will be, when your **children shall say to you** [while watching their fathers kill the lambs], 'What *does* this service *mean* to you?' Then you shall say, 'It *is* **the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover,** Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and **delivered our houses**' " (Ex. 12:24-27).

Consider for a moment! How could the children ask about the Passover sacrifice, if they had not been able to observe it being done at their houses? When the children would see their fathers offering this sacrifice and would ask,

"What does this service mean?" they were to answer, "**It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover**." This was the answer the heads of families were to give to each succeeding generation, WHEN THEY WERE SETTLED IN THE LAND AFTER THE EXODUS!

The meaning of these verses in Exodus 12 is obvious! No tabernacle/ temple Passover sacrifice is even remotely hinted at in the explanation that God commanded them to give their children for all generations to come. There was no question concerning God's commands for observing the Passover. The people of Israel understood that it was strictly a domestic observance. Although many of their descendants forsook God's commands and neglected to keep the Passover, the knowledge that it was a domestic observance was not lost. Historical records show that the majority of the Jews in New Testament times kept the Passover at their houses, fulfilling the ordinances that God gave through Moses in the Book of the Law.

Philo, a Jewish historian, confirms that the Passover lambs were slain at the houses of the Jews during the first century before the destruction of the temple in AD 70. He states that the Passover was "...called by the Hebrews in their own tongue, the Pasch, on which **the whole people sacrifice, every member of them, WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE PRIESTS, because the law has granted to the whole nation for one special day in every year the right of the priesthood and of performing the sacrifices themselves**" (*De Decalogue*, p. 159, emphasis added).

Another historical work by Philo also records the domestic observance of the Passover: "After the New Moon comes the fourth feast, called the crossing feast, which the Hebrews in their native tongue call *Pascha* [Passover]. In this festival many myriads of victims are offered—**by the whole people**, old and young alike, **raised for that particular day to the dignity of the priesthood**. For at other times the priests according to the ordinance of the law carry out both the public sacrifices [evening and morning] and those offered by private individuals. **But on this occasion the whole nation performs the sacred rites and acts as priest**..." (*DeSpec*, Leg. II, p. 45, emphasis added).

These historical records confirm that the Passover commands that God gave to Moses and Aaron, which are recorded in Exodus 12, were still in effect. These commands of God were established as lasting ordinances for the children of Israel throughout their generations. As the historical accounts of Philo show, most of the Jews in his time were still following the command to observe a domestic Passover.

When we study the New Testament accounts of the Passover observance, we will see that Jesus, Who obeyed God the Father perfectly and never sinned or followed the traditions of the Jews, kept the domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th with His disciples. The New Testament shows that the domestic Passover was followed by the temple sacrifice of the Passover, in which the lambs were slain late on the 14th and were eaten on the 15th. Both practices were observed by the Jews of that day.

Despite the fact that there is no command from God anywhere in the Scriptures to support the temple sacrifice of the Passover, this practice eventually became a national tradition among the Jews. Although the destruction of the temple in AD 70 ended the temple sacrifice of the lambs, the tradition of a 15th Passover did not die. Today, most Jews believe that the 15th day of the first month is the day that God ordained for the Passover. But God commanded that the Passover be observed at the beginning of the 14th—not at the beginning of the 15th.

All Sacrifices except the Passover Were to be Brought to the Tabernacle

With the exception of the Passover sacrifice, God commanded that all animal sacrifices be brought to the tabernacle to be offered on His altar: "And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to Aaron and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying,

'Any man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat *for a sacrifice to the LORD* in the camp, or kills it out the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to offer an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, blood guilt shall be charged to that man; he has shed blood. And that man shall be cut off from among his people, **so that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices** which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them to the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to the priest, and **offer them *for* peace offerings** to the LORD.

"And the priest shall sprinkle the blood against the side of the altar of the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savor to the LORD. **And they shall no more offer their sacrifices to goat demons**, **after whom they have gone whoring**. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations" (Lev. 17:1-7).

This was a perpetual statute for the children of Israel. Every sacrifice except the Passover sacrifice had to be brought to the tabernacle and offered to God. Despite this command, the children of Israel repeatedly apostatized and offered sacrifices to demons and pagan gods, which brought God's wrath upon them time and time again. In fact, that is the history of the children of Israel, as recorded in the books of Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Scriptures that we have studied in this chapter make it clear that the ordinances and statutes which God instituted at the Passover in Egypt remained in effect throughout Old Testament times. The Scriptural account of the second Passover, observed in the wilderness in the year that the tabernacle was set up, is undeniable evidence that God did not change either the time or the location for slaying the Passover lambs. He did not change the ordinances which required that the lambs be slain at individual homes at the beginning of the 14th. The Old Testament observance was

meant to continue until the coming of Christ as our perfect Passover sacrifice from God the Father. The ordinances concerning the sacrificing of the lambs were changed when Jesus Christ instituted the new Passover symbols representing His body and His blood.

In the next chapter, we will examine additional historical and Scriptural records concerning the observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Old Testament times. We will read eye-opening statements by Jewish writers attesting to major changes in the observance of the two feasts, and we will learn from the Scriptures approximately when those changes began.

CHAPTER TEN

CHANGES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PASSOVER OBSERVANCE

There is no question that the Passover commands in Exodus 12 have been misinterpreted and given different meanings than the true scriptural meaning of God's ordinances and statutes delivered to Moses. False interpretations of key Hebrew terms that are used in the Scriptural commands have caused great confusion as to which day God designated for the Passover observance, the 14th or the 15th. As we have seen, the time for slaying the lambs—Hebrew *ben ha arbayim*, "between the two evenings"—was shifted from the beginning of the 14th day of the first month to the last few hours of the day. This misleading traditional interpretation eliminates nearly a full day from the Scriptural account of the Passover.

In order to understand the true meaning of God's commands, we have thoroughly examined every element pertaining to the Passover. We have studied the account of Israel's first Passover in great detail and have exposed the errors in the arguments for a 15th Passover. We have also studied the observance of Israel's second Passover after the tabernacle was set up, and have found no Scriptural evidence of any changes in the Passover at that time. To the contrary, our study showed that the Passover commands in Exodus 12 were established as perpetual ordinances for the children of Israel throughout their generations (Num. 9:3).

Comparison of 14th Passover and 15th Passover

Over the centuries, most of the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel forsook the observance of the Passover. The Jews, who are primarily of the tribe of Judah, still profess to observe the Passover, but they do not observe it according to the ordinances of God. Contrary to God's commands in Exodus 12, the traditional Jewish Passover combines the Passover meal with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, dropping an entire day from the Scriptural chronology. This deviation from the commands of God completely overlooks the separate meanings of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The following comparison of the 14th and 15th Passover observances shows the sharp differences between the ordinances of God and the traditions of men.

Original 14th Passover	Traditional Jewish Temple Passover
1) Lamb killed at beginning of 14th	1) Lamb killed at end of 14th
2) Lamb killed at home	2) Lamb killed at temple
3) Blood sprinkled on door posts of houses	3) Blood sprinkled on altar and fat burned on altar
4) Meal eaten on night of 14th	4) Meal eaten on night of 15th
5) Commemorates the passing over	5) Commemorates the Exodus
6) Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread total eight days	6) Seven days of Unleavened Bread incorrectly called Passover

This comparison enables us to clearly see how human misinterpretations and alterations of God's commands have significantly changed the observance of God's original commands for Old Testament Passover. In this chapter, we will read historical evidence of changes in the Jewish observance of the Passover which led to the elimination of the 14th as the Passover day. We will also see what a leading Biblical dictionary reveals about these changes in the Passover observance.

Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread Originally Were Separate Feasts—Not One Combined Feast

The commands of God in Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23 make it undeniably clear that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to be observed as two separate feasts, one following the other. But today the Jewish practice is to keep the Passover on the 15th day of the first month, combined with the first night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The modern Jewish calendar designates the 15th as the Passover day, and the Jewish Passover meal, called the Seder, is eaten on the 15th. This practice clearly conflicts with the Scriptural commands to observe the Passover on the 14th day of the month.

As we have learned, this change in the observance of the Passover was justified by misinterpreting the term *ben ha arbayim* as the afternoon of the 14th, rather than the beginning of the day, as the Scriptures define it. Choosing to follow their own interpretation of *ben ha arbayim*, the Jews killed their Passover lambs late on the 14th and ate the Passover meal on the night of the 15th.

The Jews admit that their practice of combining the Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread deviates from the original observance of the two feasts. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* states, "Comparison of the successive strata of the Pentateuchal laws bearing on the festival makes it plain that the institution, as developed, is really of composite character. **TWO FESTIVALS ORIGINALLY DISTINCT HAVE BECOME MERGED**..." (Vol. IX, "Passover," emphasis added).

Jewish authorities understand and acknowledge that originally there were two distinct and separate feasts: 1) the Passover, commemorating the passing over in Egypt; and 2) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, commemorating the Exodus. The Passover day preceded the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was observed for seven days. The entire spring festival lasted a total of eight days—not seven days, as the Jews now celebrate.

Josephus Records Eight Day Festivals in His Time

As Josephus shows, the transition from eight days to seven days was not yet complete in New Testament times. In the late first century, Josephus recorded his understanding of the number of days included in the observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "...We keep a

feast **for eight days**, which is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. II, Ch. 15, Sec. 1, emphasis added).

There is no question that the Jews in Josephus' lifetime observed a full eight days for the spring festival, exactly as they did for the fall festival, which includes the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days and the Last Great Day, making a total of eight days. Notice Josephus' statement concerning the observance of this fall festival: "Upon the fifteenth day of the same month [the seventh month], when the season of the year is changing for winter, the law enjoins us to pitch tabernacles in every one of our houses, so that we preserve ourselves from the cold of that time of year....and **keep a festival for eight days**....on the eighth day all work was laid aside, and then as we said before, they sacrificed to God..." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. III, Ch. 10, Sec. 4, emphasis added).

Josephus' statement shows that the Jews of the late first century were still observing the Scriptural commands to keep the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days and the Last Great Day which follows, making eight days (Lev. 23:33-44). They understood that these eight days were whole days, calculated from sunset to sunset. There can be no doubt that it was the same for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Jews of Josephus' day were observing the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month, in addition to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins on the 15th and lasts for seven days, making a **total of eight days** (Lev. 23:4-8).

The Jews Later Combined the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Making a Seven Day Feast

The combining of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which reduced the eight-day festival to a seven-day feast, has been well documented. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* confirms this change in the observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

"In contemporary Judaism the word *Pesh*, or 'Passover,' is used to refer to a whole range of observances related to the season. This usage has been customary since *ca*. the second century of the Christian era....As the employment of the one title, Passover, indicates, the Mishna, like Josephus, treated all the observances as parts of a single integrated feast. **This has not always been so**."

"This indicates a recollection that there were two separable units or feasts in the single complex of observances. But this distinction was not carefully kept....Amid all the uncertainty about the Passover and Unleavened Bread in Israel there is general agreement on two points: the feast contains **two originally separate components**" (Vol. III, s. v. "*Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread*," emphasis added).

Much has been written concerning the history of the Passover and the changes that occurred in its observance. These historical records clearly attest to the fact that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which were

originally observed as two separate feasts, were combined by the Jews. The domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs at the beginning of the 14th was replaced by the temple sacrifice of the lambs in the late afternoon of the 14th and a Passover meal on the night of the 15th, which begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Those who understand the Scriptural account in Exodus 12 can readily see the contrast between the original domestic observance of the Passover and the later temple practice of the Jews.

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* points out this marked change in the observance of the Passover: "In many respects the observance [of the Passover at the beginning of the 14th by the Jewish Samaritans] corresponds more closely to the scriptural prescriptions, notably those of Exod. 12, than the true observance in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus—a reminder, among other things, that in its three thousand years or more of history as an Israelite observance, **Passover has never ceased to change, however imperceptibly**.

"The largest block of material in the OT dealing with **Passover and Unleavened Bread** is found in Exod. 12:1-13:16. It occurs as a part of the narrative of the slaying of the first-born of the Egyptians and of the ensuing departure of the Israelites. The object of the narrators is to associate both observances with the historical deliverance of Israel. They do this by stressing that **both were established in Egypt**....

"He [H.G. May] feels that [Exodus] 12:1-28 as a whole associates the feast with Jewish life in the Diaspora: 'the representation,' he says, 'is consistently that of a **simple, private home celebration** with the sacrificial animal a sheep.'

"The fact that it [the account in Ex. 12:1-28] is given **a wholly domestic setting** and lacks a temple ceremony is its most important distinction in relation to all other accounts" (Ibid.).

Although the observance of the Passover shifted to a temple sacrifice, the domestic killing of the Passover lambs was not wholly supplanted by the temple practice. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* reveals that many of the Sadducees—which included the high priests' families—retained the practice of the domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th. This fact is quite surprising. We would expect the high priests to observe the temple sacrifice of the Passover on the afternoon of the 14th, since they were in charge of the temple. But such was not the case. Notice: "This story of the first paschal lamb, as related in the Bible, became the pattern for the observance of the Passover **during the period of the Temple**, but with **a few modifications**. Thus **the sacrifice took place in the sanctuary and the blood was sprinkled upon the altar**.

"**The Pharisees and Sadducees had a dispute as to the time when the slaughtering should take place; the former held it should be in the last three hours before sunset, the latter, BETWEEN SUNSET AND NIGHTFALL**" (p. 406).

This record of the dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees shows that two separate Passover observances continued side by side. The

Jews did not universally embrace the temple sacrifice of the Passover. As the historical documentation shows, the Pharisees changed from the domestic sacrifice of the lambs to a temple sacrifice late on the 14th and a Passover meal on the 15th. The Sadducees, including some high priests and their families, continued to practice the domestic killing of the Passover lambs at the beginning of the 14th. The following comparison shows the great difference between the domestic observance, as commanded in Exodus 12, and the temple practice of New Testament times:

"In relation to the Passover of the NT period this section disclosed both similarities and differences. There is the same concern for a family arrangement of the feast; though instead of stating that the minimum size of a 'family' is ten, it insists that a man must join with 'his neighbor' (Ex. 12:4) so that his group may be large enough to consume the lamb. The ordering seems to have been done more in terms of natural family units than by means of the 'companies' of the era of the Mishna. Moreover there is **no hint here** [in the account in Exodus 12] **that Passover was a pilgrim feast**, nor even of any common shrine for several families....There is **no explicit reference to priestly or Levitical assistance** at the slaughter; **the Mishna obviously CHANGES THE ORIGINAL MEANING** of the phrase 'the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel' (Exod. 12:6) by **treating it as a warrant for the three courses** needed to accommodate all the temple sacrifice (Pes. 5:5). The counsel [in Exodus 12] to kill the lambs 'in the evening' is more literally followed by the Samaritan rite; **the Hebrew is PROPERLY INTERPRETED AS DUSK and cannot be fully reconciled with the later practice of making the sacrifice in the late afternoon**....The most striking difference between this priestly account and the later practice, however, is that the observance, though obviously sacrificial in character, **was entirely a DOMESTIC affair**. There is no clear reference to a shrine; and, instead of being dashed against an altar, there is the application of 'some of the blood' (Exod. 12:7; cf. vs. 22) to the door-posts and lintel of each house in which the celebration occurs....This is not just a simple domestic celebration; it is a most solemn observance" (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III, s.v. "*Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread*," emphasis added).

This comparison of the Scriptural commands and the later practices of the Jews shows some of the misinterpretations that were applied to Exodus 12 to justify changing the Passover to a temple sacrifice. As *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states, three courses of priests and Levites were needed for the temple sacrifice of the Passover, due to the large number of lambs. Each course was allotted one and a half hours, making a total of four and a half hours for the temple sacrifice of the lambs. It was impossible to fit all the sacrificing into *ben ha arbayim*— "between sunset and nightfall"—which lasts only one to one and a half hours. The problem was circumvented by moving the slaying of the lambs to the afternoon of the day. By the time the lambs were roasted and the Passover meal was ready, the sun had set, ending the Passover day and beginning the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thus the Passover was combined with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the original observance of eight days—composed of two separate feasts—became a combined feast of only

seven days. *For Talmudic records of the schedule for the temple sacrifice of the Passover, and the rabbinical interpretations which were used to justify the afternoon sacrifice, see Appendix S.*

The Encyclopedia Judaica, a leading authority in the history of Jewish practices, acknowledges that **the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were originally observed as two separate and distinct feasts**: "The Feast of Passover consists of two parts: The Passover ceremony and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. **Originally both parts existed separately, but at the beginning of the Exile** [in Babylon 603-585 BC] **they were combined**.

"**Passover was originally** not a pilgrimage feast, but **a domestic ceremony** consisting of the slaughtering and eating of the paschal animal. This animal according to Exodus 12:21 was a sheep or goat, according to Deut. 16:2 [this verse does not refer to the sacrifice of the Passover] either a sheep or bovine animal....

"Originally the Passover was celebrated among the families (Ex. 12:21 [J]) in tents, after the territorial occupation, in houses. After the cultic centralization of King Josiah, the celebration of the Passover was transferred to the central Sanctuary in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:2, 7; II Kings 23:21-23). The requirement that the slaughtering, preparing, and eating of the paschal animals was to take place in the forecourts of the Temple was maintained after the Exile (II Chron. 30:1-5, 35:13-14; Jub. 49:12, 20). Later, because of the large numbers of participants, the paschal animal was killed at the Temple..., but **boiled** and eaten in the houses of Jerusalem (e.g., Pes. 5:10; 7:12). The transfer of the Passover feast to the Temple entailed the end of the rite of blood [which was sprinkled on the door posts and lintel]; the blood of the paschal animals was, like other sacrificial blood, now poured on the base of the altar (II Chron. 30:16; 35:11)" (Vol. 13, s.v. "Passover," emphasis added).

The combining of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread reduced the observance of the two feasts from eight days to seven days: "To fix a common date for the Jews in Babylonia the *mazzot* [unleavened bread] feast after 587 B.C.E. was given a fixed date, the 15th to the 21st of the first month, and thus connected with the Passover..." (Ibid.). The entire seven-day festival was renamed "Passover: "Passover, a spring festival, beginning on the 15th day of Nisan, lasting seven days in Israel..." (Ibid.).

After discussing the findings of various authorities, the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* relates the following concerning the combining of the two feasts: "From all this Wellhausen concluded that **the coalescence of Passover and Unleavened Bread did not occur until the time of Josiah**. The agricultural festival of unleavened bread was kept as such as a national Israelite feast, he felt, until the days of Josiah. The section in **Deut. 16:1-10 was interpreted as an attempt to abolish the private Passover celebrations** [We will thoroughly study Deuteronomy 16 in Chapter Fourteen.] and to eliminate the apotropaic rites [the sprinkling of the blood on the door posts and lintel] characteristic of these [the domestic observance of the Passover]; **therefore the Passover was combined with the national feast [of**

unleavened bread] in Jerusalem" (Vol. III, s.v. "Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread," emphasis added).

In his book *The Jewish Festivals—From Their Beginnings to Our Own Day*, Hayyim Schauss explains the changes in the observance of the Passover that were instituted at the time of Josiah's reform: "It was in this way that **Pesach** [Passover] **and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were joined, and the two distinct spring festivals became one historical holiday**, a symbol of the striving of the people toward national freedom. But, since the festival was still bound up with the family, or, at most, the village community, it could not yet become a great national holiday. It was only later, when Pesach was observed by all Jews in one place, in one great sanctuary, that it gained national importance.

"This happened in the last few decades before the destruction of the first Temple, in the time of Josiah, King of Judah. Israel, the great Jewish kingdom of the north, was no more. [It is incorrect to describe the northern ten-tribed kingdom of Israel as Jewish. The Jews dwelt only in the southern kingdom of Judah]. All that remained was Judah, the smaller kingdom of the south. In the reign of Josiah there was a strong progressive party, seeking to reconstruct Jewish national life and establish it on a new basis of justice and right. Sweeping reforms were instituted. One of the most outstanding was the elimination of all the 'high places' because Jerusalem was declared the only sanctuary for all Jews. Sacrifices were forbidden anywhere else and only Jerusalem was to be the goal of the pilgrimages made at holiday time. The Festivals, therefore, lost their local character and became national observances that united all Jews in the one holy place, the Temple in Jerusalem.

"**Through this reform the Pesach ceremonial [observance] took on almost a new character**. Since it was forbidden to make the Paschal sacrifice anywhere but in the Temple at Jerusalem, it was impossible to smear the blood of the sacrificial lamb upon the doorposts of the houses. **In general, the observance lost its ancient *weird* character**. The Book of Kings tells us truly that such a Pesach as [the temple-centered observance] was observed in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, the year in which the reform was instituted, had not been celebrated [in that manner] since the Jews settled in Palestine.

"We cannot be certain how long a time passed before the Jews accepted these reforms in practice and ceased to offer the Pesach sacrifice in their homes. Nor can we be certain how long it took for Pesach and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to become as one festival. But we do know that the importance of the festival grew and that it became, in time, the greatest Jewish national holiday" (pp. 44-46, emphasis added).

There is ample evidence in both Scripture and history of the changes that occurred in the observance of the Passover during Old Testament times. None can deny that the temple sacrifice of the lambs differed greatly from the domestic Passover that is recorded in Exodus 12. **It is impossible to reconcile the temple sacrifice of the lambs with the domestic sacrifice**

that God commanded. They are two different practices. The domestic Passover was instituted by God. The later temple practice was instituted by men. It was men who changed the Passover from a domestic sacrifice at the beginning of the 14th to a temple sacrifice on the afternoon of the 14th and a Passover meal on the night of the 15th. This man-made institution, which became a national tradition of the Jews, is the basis of many arguments for a 15th Passover.

As we have seen, the 14th/15th Passover controversy is a result of the attempts of men to distort the Scriptures in order to justify their chosen tradition. Instead of submitting to the commands of God, they claim that their tradition holds the same status as the commands of God. That can never be! No tradition of men can ever have the force of a commandment of God.

Of the dozens of papers written on the Passover that the author has read and studied, all supporting a 15th Passover, not one addresses the Scriptural and historical evidence that is presented in this chapter. Some scholars who have published papers and books about the Passover have completely ignored the historical records of the original observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This glaring oversight raises questions about the motives of those who present their "final solutions for the 15th Passover." Such negligence must be attributed either to a lack of thorough research or to deliberate censorship by these biased scholars, who appear to hold their personal beliefs in higher esteem than the true facts of history, as many Jews hold their tradition in higher esteem than the Word of God.

These scholars may refuse to acknowledge the truth, but the evidence is undeniable. The records of history conclusively show that the Passover changed from a domestic observance at the beginning of the 14th day of the first month to a temple sacrifice in the afternoon of the 14th and a Passover meal on the 15th, merging the Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As Schauss described, "...the observance lost its ancient *weird* [in his opinion—not God's] character..." and "...took on almost a new character." This "new character" was the later practice of sacrificing the lambs at the temple at the end of the 14th day, which is the basis of the traditional 15th Passover that the Jews observe today. Before we study the introduction of the temple sacrifice, and the reasons for this change, let's look at a leading rabbi's thoughts about the Passover issue.

Some Rabbis Are Rethinking the 14th-15th Problems

As the Jews anticipate the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, some rabbis are reexamining their traditional beliefs concerning the Passover. While it does not appear likely that they will return to the original Passover as established by God in Exodus 12, they are nevertheless rethinking their traditional views concerning the sacrificing of the lamb and the meaning of the Passover day. Some rabbis are beginning to realize that the 14th, the Passover day, differs in meaning from the 15th, the first day of the Feast of

Unleavened Bread. They are beginning to recognize that the Passover was instituted to commemorate God's passing over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt— not the Exodus from Egypt.

The following excerpts show that this Scriptural fact is being discussed among Jewish rabbis today. These statements were made by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, chief rabbi of the city of Efrat and dean of Ohr Torah Institution of Israel, in an article in his "Shabbat Shalom" column under the pen name "**Bo**," as published in Canada in the *Jewish Western Bulletin*. (*Please note: In this article Rabbi Riskin writes the word God as G-d, which reflects the Jewish prohibition against pronouncing the name of God lest one take God's name in vain*.)

Rabbi Riskin writes, "And it's not just the obvious fact that in the Diaspora, they celebrate an extra day at the end [of the seven-day Passover week], but surprisingly enough, **an extra day at the beginning of the festival** for us here in Israel.

"In Bo, the Passover sequence begins with the command for the Israelites to sacrifice the paschal lamb that must be eaten in haste, and we are told how **G-d will pass through Egypt and kill every first born, and that the blood of the slaughtered lamb is to be placed on the door posts** as a sign for G-d" (emphasis added).

He then discusses the difference of opinion about which day was to be remembered, the 14th or the 15th, or the entire seven-day festival. Next, he writes, "The consequence of this difference of opinion leads to the speculation that we're really talking about **two festivals** whose distinct characteristics contain a subtle difference for the Israeli and the Diaspora Jewries. **The 14th day of Nisan is the one-day festival of the Passover sacrifice**, the paschal lamb; **the 15th day commences a seven-day festival of Matzot and redemption**....In fact, when the paschal lamb sacrifice will eventually be revived on the 14th of Nisan, it will only take place here in Israel. In the Diaspora, there is no possibility of a paschal lamb sacrifice, and there never will be. The closest we'll ever come to [it] there, is a shank bone on a Seder plate. And in Israel, may the paschal lamb take the place of so many of our best and brightest for the eventuality of ultimate sacrifice, so that they may truly taste the matzot of redemption and peace" (emphasis added).

These statements by Rabbi Riskin show that rabbis today are aware of the separate and distinct meanings of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, although the two feasts have for centuries been observed as a single festival. While some rabbis may be opening their eyes to the meaning of the Passover, they still do not recognize the true Paschal Lamb—Jesus Christ, Whose blood alone can bring redemption to the world.

In this chapter we have read statements from both Christian and Jewish sources which acknowledge that the Passover observance was changed from the ordinances and statutes that were instituted by God. In the next chapter, we will examine the Scriptures to learn the circumstances that led to this change in the observance of the Passover.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A HISTORY OF REBELLION AND REPEATED APOSTASIES

To help us understand the changes that took place in the observance of the Passover, let us survey the history of the children of Israel. The Scriptures record the history of their unbelief and rebellion against God, which began soon after the Exodus. After God spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, He called Moses up to the mountain to receive the tables of stone on which the commandments were written, and to give him instructions for building a tabernacle where the people could offer sacrifices to Him. While Moses was with God, the children of Israel turned back to worshiping the gods of Egypt, which led Aaron to make a golden calf. In the following year, at the time near the Feast of Tabernacles, God commanded Moses to send twelve spies into the Promised Land in preparation for their invasion and expulsion of the Canaanites. God's intention was that the children of Israel go into the Promised Land at that time. God, in His gracious mercy and lovingkindness, never intended the people to wander in the wilderness for forty years. But after spying out the land for forty days, the spies came back and gave an evil report, telling the people that they would never be able to rid the land of the inhabitants. Joshua and Caleb, who gave a good report, were the only two who showed faith in God. All the children of Israel rebelled, accused God and refused to trust in His power. Therefore, God did not give them the inheritance at that time. Instead, as punishment for their sin of refusing to go into the Promised Land with His protection and blessing, He condemned them to wander in the wilderness for thirty-eight and one-half years more, until all in that generation who were over twenty years of age had died. The books of Leviticus and Numbers record the details of their wanderings with all their complaints, disbelief and rebellion.

At the end of those forty years, Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. It took seven years to conquer the land and divide the inheritance to the twelve tribes. In the book of Judges, we find a summary of the days of Joshua and the elders who served with him:

"And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD that He did for Israel....And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers, And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor even the works which He had done for Israel.

"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt. And they followed other gods, even the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves to them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the LORD was hot against

Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of spoilers who spoiled them. And He sold them into the hand of their enemies all around, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

"Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who spoiled them. And yet they would not listen to their judges, but they went lusting after other gods, and bowed themselves to them. They turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, for they had obeyed the commandments of the LORD; these however did not do so. And when the LORD raised judges up for them, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for the LORD took pity because of their groaning by reason of their oppressors and their crushers.

"And it came to pass when the judge was dead, they returned and made themselves more corrupt than their fathers in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. And He said, 'Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not obeyed My voice...' " (Judges 2:7-20).

The children of Israel repeated these same sins over and over again. In fact, the entire history of the twelve tribes of Israel fits this description in the book of Judges. Not only is their history a testimony of their sins of idolatry and continuous rebellion against God, but it is also a testimony of God's love, mercy and grace toward them in not wholly destroying them. In spite of Israel's repeated backslidings, God remained faithful to the promise that He had given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The last verse in the book of Judges sums up these years of rebellion against God: "In those days *there was* no king in Israel. **Every man did *what was* right in his own eyes**" (Judges 21:25).

Israel's repeated idolatry continued until the time of Samuel the prophet and priest of God. While Samuel judged Israel, the people remained faithful to their covenant with God. However, toward the end of his life, the people rejected Samuel and his sons and demanded a king. Samuel was grieved, but God told Him to do as the people had requested:

"Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them**" (I Sam. 8:7).

God chose Saul to be Israel's first king (I Sam. 9:15-17). God was with Saul in the beginning of his reign, but when he disobeyed God's commands, God forsook him. After Saul's failure, God raised up David, a man after God's own heart, to be king. During David's reign, the people were relatively faithful to God.

David's son Solomon succeeded him as king. Solomon was allowed to build the first temple of God in Jerusalem. This temple replaced the tabernacle as the center for the worship of the true God. God blessed the temple with His presence, and blessed all the people of Israel who came to worship him there.

God twice appeared to Solomon in dreams, promising to give him his heart's desire. When Solomon asked for wisdom, God blessed him not only with wisdom but with wealth beyond measure. King Solomon's rule extended from Mount Hermon in the north to the Negev desert in the south. The kingdom of Solomon was the greatest and richest kingdom in the world at that time:

"And King Solomon was greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart. And they each brought a present, vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and clothing, armor, and spices, horses, and mules, at a certain rate year by year....And the king made silver in Jerusalem like stones..." (II Chron. 9:22-27).

The "rate" referred to in these verses was a form of tribute paid to Solomon by other countries. God blessed Solomon and his kingdom above all other nations. At this point in history, Israel had the potential to become the greatest kingdom ever to exist. There was not only prosperity but great peace during Solomon's forty-year reign. In fact, the name Solomon means "peace." Many consider Solomon's kingdom to be a type of the coming kingdom of God, symbolizing the abundance and peace of the millennium during Christ's reign on earth.

During the first half of his forty-year reign, Solomon remained faithful to God. However, in his later years, Solomon allowed his foreign wives to draw him away from God and into the idolatrous worship of their false gods: "...Solomon loved many foreign women....Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. And….his wives turned away his heart after other gods. And his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God as *was* the heart of David his father.

"**For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians**, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; **and Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD** and did not *go* fully after the LORD like his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill which *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon. [That mount is called the "mount of corruption" in II Kings 23:13.] And likewise he did for all his foreign wives, and burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD *was* angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel Who had appeared to him twice..." (I Kings 11:1-9).

It is possible that Solomon built temples for nearly every pagan god known to mankind, grievously provoking the anger of the Lord, Who "...had

commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; and he did not keep that which the LORD commanded. And the LORD said to Solomon, 'Since this has been done by you, and since you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. But I will not do it in your days, for David your father's sake, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Only, I will not tear away all the kingdom, *but* I will give one tribe to your son for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen" (verses 10-13).

After the death of Solomon, the tribes of Israel divided into two kingdoms. The ten northern tribes followed Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon, and made him king. From that time forward, the Bible refers to these ten tribes as the kingdom of Israel. The son of Solomon, Rehoboam, was left with only one tribe and parts of two other tribes. He ruled the tribe of Judah, and part of the tribe of Benjamin, as well as the Levites who lived in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judah. After the division of the twelve tribes of Israel, this kingdom was known as the kingdom of Judah. Later, those of the kingdom of Judah were called Jews. Since the Jews were basically a single tribe, with a small percentage from two others, it is neither proper nor accurate to apply the term Jews to all twelve tribes of Israel.

The Evils of Jeroboam and Israel

Solomon's descent into idolatry set the stage for the decline and fall of both Israel and Judah. When Solomon sinned by turning away from God, he cast the die for the kings of Israel and Judah who would reign after him, most of whom continued his idolatrous practices. Jeroboam, first to reign over the new kingdom of Israel, even exceeded Solomon's sin. Building on the evil foundation that Solomon had laid, Jeroboam immediately led the ten tribes of Israel headlong into deeper paganism:

"Then the king [Jeroboam, now king of the northern ten tribes of Israel] took counsel, and made **two calves *of* gold** and said to them, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' And he set the one in Bethel, and he put the other in Dan. And **this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship** before the one, even to Dan. And he made houses *of worship* on the high places [pagan temples to Baal], and made priests of the lowest of the people, who were not the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam **ordered a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month**, like the feast that *is* in Judah. And he offered upon the altar. So he did in Bethel [meaning "house of God"], **sacrificing to the calves** that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

"And he offered unto the altar which he had made in Bethel on the **fifteenth day of the eighth month**, in the month which he had devised out of his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel. And he offered upon the altar and burned incense" (I Kings 12:28-33).

The date that Jeroboam chose for his idolatrous feast is significant because it coincides with the pagan religious customs of other nations of his day. The fact that Jeroboam chose the fifteenth day of the eighth month "of his own heart" does not mean that he was the first king to make it a national observance. In the nations of the ancient Near East, the 15th day of the eighth month was dedicated to the worship of kings. As one author states, "The early Babylonian kings, from the time of Sargon I till the fourth dynasty of Ur or later, claimed to be gods in their lifetime. The monarchs of the fourth dynasty of Ur in particular had temples built in their honour; they set up their statues in various sanctuaries and commanded the people to sacrifice to them; **the eighth month was especially dedicated to the kings, and sacrifices were offered to them at the new moon [the first day of the month] and on the fifteenth day of each month** [the full moon]" (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 120, emphasis added).

Jeroboam was instituting the old, pagan system of king-worship, which originated in Babylon. As we will learn later, the fifteenth day of the first month held even greater significance to these ancient people than the 15th day of the eighth month. The pagan celebration that took place on the 15th day of the first month posed a great temptation to the people of Israel and Judah. This idolatrous influence was a key factor in the changes that were later instituted in the observance of the Passover.

Jeroboam was not simply setting up a rival festival to compete with the feast that God had ordained in the seventh month, which was observed each year in the kingdom of Judah. He was setting up a full-fledged, pagan Babylonian religious and governmental system that would ultimately affect every aspect of the lives of the people. Jeroboam built a new temple with a new altar, and instituted a new priesthood, with himself as both high priest and king. This new temple was dedicated on the very day that the kings of the ancient Near East had designated as a day of homage and sacrifice to their god-kings.

Knowing that Jeroboam's idolatry would lead the entire nation astray, God sent a direct warning through one of His prophets to confront Jeroboam face to face. This was a witness against Jeroboam personally—a witness against his abominable idolatries involving pagan calf worship and a pagan priesthood, in which he made himself the high priest and led in the offering of sacrifices to the calf idol in Bethel. Now the golden calf, which had brought God's wrath upon the children of Israel in the wilderness, again brought His judgment:

"And behold, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD, to Bethel. And Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar by the word of the LORD and said, 'O, altar, altar, thus says the LORD. 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, **Josiah** by name, and upon you he shall offer the priests of the high places who burn incense upon you, and men's bones shall be burned upon you.'

"And he gave a sign the same day, saying, 'This *is* the sign which the LORD has spoken. "Behold, the altar shall be torn apart [split down the

middle], and the ashes that *are* upon it shall be poured out." ' Then it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God who had cried against the altar in Bethel, he put forth his hand from the altar, saying: 'Lay hold on him!' And his hand, which he put forth against him withered up so that he could not pull it in again to himself.

"The altar also was split asunder and the ashes poured out from the altar according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. And the king answered and said to the man of God. 'Seek now the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again.' And the man of God prayed to the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him again and became as at the beginning" (I Kings 13:1-6).

In spite of this personal warning from God, Jeroboam refused to repent of his idolatries: "After this thing Jeroboam **returned not from his evil way**, but made again from among all the people priests of the high places; whosoever would, he consecrated him, that he might be one of the priests of the high places. And by this thing there was sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth" (verses 33-34, *JPSA*).

Again God spoke through a prophet, this time pronouncing His judgment not only on Jeroboam but on the entire kingdom of Israel, which had followed the king in his abominable idolatries: "But you have **done evil above all who were before you**, and you have gone and made yourself other gods….Therefore, behold, I will...sweep away the rest of the house of Jeroboam....For the LORD shall strike Israel...and **He shall root up Israe**l out of this good land which He gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the River **because they have made their Asherim** [Hebrew plural for Asherah], **provoking the LORD to anger**. And He shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam who sinned, and because he made Israel to sin" (I Kings 14:7-10, 15-16).

In spite of the blessings that God had given to Israel, and the covenant they had made with Him, the children of Israel chose to reject God. They turned to the golden calves of Jeroboam, which were idols for the worship of the Baal, and they made idols for the goddess Asherah. The worship of these pagan deities is condemned by God in the Scriptures time and time again.

The False Gods of Apostate Israel and Judah

As the book of Judges shows, the worship of Baal and Asherah began very early to corrupt the people of Israel. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* points to evidence that idols to the two deities could be found throughout the land: "According to Judg. 3:7 there was an association of worship between Baal and Asherah. The passage states that the Israelites were evil because they abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and Asherahs. The reference to these deities in the plural may indicate that each

locality had its Baal and its Asherah, who were consorts worshipped at the same sanctuary" (Vol. I, s.v."Asherah").

Who were these false deities that the people of Israel worshiped, bringing upon themselves the judgment of God? Asherah "...was the Hebrew name for an Amorite or Canaanite goddess, who was worshipped in various parts of the Near East" (Ibid.).

This goddess, known to the Canaanites as Anat, was worshiped in other parts of the ancient world as Diana, Artemis, Ishtar, Isis, Athirat and Astarte. The Canaanite god Baal was also worshiped in different lands. In Babylon, he was the sun-god Shamash. In Assyria, he was the god Saturn. In Egypt, he was both Ra the sun-god, and Osiris, god of the underworld. The worship of all these pagan religions originated at the tower of Babel in ancient Babylon.

The Two Babylons by Alexander Hislop provides one of the most complete histories of the ancient religion that was founded by Nimrod and Semiramis. As he traces the history of this pagan religion, Hislop shows that its doctrines and practices are being perpetuated in Catholicism and many so-called "Christian" customs of the modern world.

In his book, Hislop reveals that Baal was the Canaanite name for Nimrod, who was worshiped throughout the ancient world. Hislop also shows that Nimrod, whose Egyptian name was Osiris, was represented as a young bull: "The ordinary way in which the favourite Egyptian divinity *Osiris* [Nimrod] was *mystically* **represented was under the form of a young bull or calf**—the calf Apis—**from which the golden calf of the Israelites was borrowed**" (The Two Babylons, p. 45, emphasis added).

This was the god that the people of Israel worshiped when they forsook their God and went after the golden calf that Jeroboam placed at Bethel. Instead of worshiping the true Lord of heaven and earth, they chose to worship the deified Nimrod, the false lord of the heathen nations around them: "While the Greek name Belus represented both Baal and Bel of the Chaldees, these were nevertheless two entirely distinct titles. These titles were both alike often given to the same god, but they had totally different meanings. **Baal**, as we have already seen, signified '**The Lord**'..." (Ibid., p. 26, emphasis added).

Asherah, or Semiramis, who was both mother and wife of Nimrod, was the principal goddess of the ancient world. She was worshiped both as a virgin and as the mother of the gods: "**Semiramis**, then, **the first deified queen** of that city and tower whose top was intended to reach to heaven, must have been the prototype of the goddess who '*first* made towers in cities.' When we look at the Ephesian Diana, we find evidence to the very same effect. In general, Diana was **depicted as a virgin**, and the patroness of virginity; but the Ephesian Diana was quite different. She was represented with all the attributes of the **Mother of the gods**...and, *as* the Mother of the gods, she wore a turreted crown, such as no one can contemplate

without being forcibly reminded of the tower of Babel. Now this tower-bearing Diana is by an ancient scholiast **expressly identified with Semiramis**" (Ibid., p. 30, emphasis added).

As the mother of Nimrod and of other gods, Semiramis embodied the reproductive powers of all life: "In the religious literature of Babylonia Tammuz [Nimrod reborn] appears as the youthful spouse or lover of Isthar, **the great mother goddess, the embodiment of the reproductive energies of nature**" (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 379, emphasis added).

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible clearly links the worship of this great mother goddess with the worship of Asherah, the fertility goddess of the Canaanites: "Many details concerning the place of **Asherah** in the pantheon have been supplied from the Ras Shamra Texts. At ancient Ugarit she was **the mother-goddess**, consort of El, **mother of seventy gods including Baal**, who is called *bn 'trt* ('son of Arhirat'). Animal sacrifices were offered to her, as to other deities at Ugarit....As an important fertility deity of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, she would represent a formidable rival to Yahweh under the sponsorship of the Phoenician princess Jezebel" (Vol. I, s.v. "Asherah").

Semiramis was worshiped in Canaanite religion not only as the mother of Baal but also as his wife: "Until two or three decades ago, Canaanite literature and religion were almost unknown but for the scanty knowledge about them which may have been derived from late sources. But thanks to French excavations, directed by Claude Schaeffer, at Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit, situated on the coast of N. Syria, very important material has been discovered....The chief deity of the Ugaritic pantheon is 'Il (El). He is a sky god. He is father of the other gods and is supreme lord over the gods and ruler over the assembly of the gods on the mountain in the N—i.e., Mount Cassius. Baal is another important deity, previously well known from the OT. His wife was Anat [the Asherah of the O.T.]. Roughly these two deities may be compared with the two Mesopotamian deities Tammuz and Isthar. Like the latter, Baal and Anat [Asherah] are vegetation deities" (Ibid., s.v. "Canaanite").

As Baal and Asherah, Nimrod and Semiramis were attributed with the power to produce bountiful harvests by imparting fertility to the earth. The ancient fertility rites that were held in their honor were lewd orgies in which naked dancing and promiscuous sex were freely indulged in by all. The following description of this orgiastic worship shows why God so vehemently condemned Israel for imitating the heathen: "In groves and fields throughout the land, the presence of Baal was marked by naked pillars or tree stems stuck upright into the ground. Because Baal impregnated the land by copulation, the ceremonies in his honor were often imitative sexual acts....Sometimes the god was shown astride a bull, an animal symbolic of procreative power. Sometimes the sun was a nimbus [halo] which enclosed him; at other times he was a phallus with the head of a god. Images of Astarte depicted her in the nude with her legs apart, holding two white doves in her hands, while at her feet a lion and a coiled serpent lay stretched out submissively [bestiality]..." (Bach, *Strange Sects and Curious Cults*, p. 14).

In *The Two Babylons*, Hislop states that the worship of fire and the practice of passing through fire were also part of Baal worship. The Bible reveals that this vile worship included burning children in the fire. The prophet Jeremiah recorded God's indictment of the Jews and their kings for this practice. God said, "They have also built the high places of Baal [the valley of Hinnom] **to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings to Baal,** which I never commanded nor spoke, nor did it come into My mind" (Jer. 19:5).

Hislop makes a startling revelation in describing these human sacrifices. He shows that cannibalism was a part of Baal worship when he states, "Hence, the priests of Nimrod or Baal were necessarily required to eat of the human sacrifices; and thus it has come to pass that 'Cahna-Bal,' the 'Priests of Baal,' is the established word in our own tongue for the devourer of human flesh" (*The Two Babylons*, p. 232).

These were the abominable practices and the perverse worship that Jeroboam instituted as the official religion of the ten tribes in the kingdom of Israel.

The Significance of Nisan 14 and 15 in the Pagan Religions

Under Baalism, Israel forsook the Passover, the 14th day of the first month, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins on the 15th and continues through the 21st. In their place, Israel adopted a pagan festival in honor of Baal and Asherah, which also began on the 15th day of the first month.

In all the debate over whether to observe the Passover on the 14th or the 15th, most people have not been aware that very different meanings were attached to these two days by the pagan religions of the ancient Near East. The 14th day was numbered among the "unlucky" days of the month, as the following reference shows:

"Sacrificial meals were regularly set out for the deities every day. But there were special days which required extra sacrifices and special ceremonies. Every day was sacred to a particular god. Special lists, the so-called hemerologies, enumerate these, and mark the lucky and dangerous ('evil') days. **The seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth of each month were especially unlucky**...but it should be noted that while men abstained from certain activities on these days, the cause was not the same as in the case of the Israelite sabbath: **these days were evil and dangerous**, while the sabbath had a positive value" (Riggren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, p. 82, emphasis added).

The fourteenth and the twenty-first days of the first month were especially UNLUCKY DAYS for the Egyptians, weren't they? On the fourteenth day, 4,800,000 EGYPTIANS WERE KILLED BY THE LORD. ALL THE FIRSTBORN OF MAN AND BEAST WERE KILLED IN ONE NIGHT! No wonder the fourteenth day was considered unlucky!

What about the twenty-first day of the first month? That day was unlucky for the Egyptians as well. Their armies were destroyed in the Red Sea by the power of God! Yes, indeed, those were horribly unlucky days for the Egyptians. In the Scriptural account of the events leading up to the Exodus, we are not told specifically when some of the more devastating plagues fell on the Egyptians, but it is likely that God sent these plagues on some of the other "unlucky days." It would be in keeping with God's purpose to use their own days as powerful witnesses against them.

While the 14th day of the month was regarded as evil and dangerous, the 15th was considered a day of rejoicing and good fortune: "**Special feast days in each month were**, for instance the day of the new moon (the first [day of the month]), and the day of **the full moon (the fifteenth** [day of the month]), which was later called Sapattu" (Ibid., p. 83, emphasis added).

It is significant that the two major festivals in pagan religions were observed in the same months that the feasts of God were observed. We are told, "Finally, from Uruk we have a number of ritual texts for the two akitu festivals of Anu, **one in Nisan, the other in Tishrit** [the seventh month]" (Ibid., p. 88, emphasis added).

God commanded the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days in the month of Nisan (Abib), and the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days in the month of Tishri. Both of these festivals begin on the 15th day of the month, the day of the full moon. Since the pagans also observed their festivals on the 15th day of the month, and in the same months as God's festivals, it was easy for the children of Israel to slip into apostasy. At the same time that the feasts of God were being observed in Israel, the heathen nations around were keeping seven-day festivals to Baal! These pagan festivals were counterfeits of the feasts of the true God. (Besides the pagan festivals in the first and seventh months, a feast dedicated to the pagan god-kings was held on the 15th day of the eighth month. This practice was imitated by Jeroboam.)

The following description of the seven-day spring feast of Baal shows the licentious practices that were indulged in during these pagan festivals: "...Days sacred to Baal, days when the earth sprang to life, the spring equinox, the time of planting, found the populace going to the temples and groves en masse....**The spring festivals reached their climaxes in sexual acts performed on housetops** where the participants felt they were nearer the sun god's power, **and in the groves** where, it was believed, Baal himself would join them in their worship. There were those who spawned their human seed upon the ground, sincerely trusting that this invoked a special heavenly blessing. At the temple feasts, proxies for the invisible god and goddess [human representatives—people dressed in costumes as gods and goddesses] gorged themselves and, in wanton dances, called upon the '**bull god**' to appear. Women, intoxicated by concoctions of herbs and wine, lay naked upon the newly-planted fields in adulation of Astarte [Asherah]. These were the occasions when the fathers gave their daughters to their own sons for harlotry or took their own daughters to play the role of wife [those

who conceived performed the abortion rites of Baal as well]....For seven days and nights [which began on the 15th of Nisan] the demonstrations continued..." (Bach, *Strange Sects and Curious Cults*, p. 15, emphasis added).

These seven days of orgiastic celebrations coincided exactly with the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Satan had counterfeited God's feast days in order to lead Israel astray through the lust of the flesh!

The rhythmic chants and lewd dances that accompanied Baal's feasts bear witness to the wanton behavior of the participants. Similar acts of sexual abandonment and unrestraint are aroused today by the animistic rhythm of rock and roll, heavy metal music, rap music and the satanic songs of music cults. The "free love" that is incited by this cultic music is a twentieth-century version of Baal worship! Notice the similarities in this description of Baal's worshipers: "...The demonstrations continued while chanting worshippers ceaselessly wound their way across the land, pausing to kiss the phallic symbols in the fields....At the edges of the field, **dancers punctuated their rhythmic choreography by rolling on the ground** to imitate the mothering of seeds [rolling in the seed of Baal, who copulated with the earth]..." (Ibid., pp. 15-16, emphasis added).

Self-mutilation was also part of Baal worship. The priests of Baal customarily slashed their bodies to persuade Baal to send rain, just as they did when Elijah challenged them on Mt. Carmel. At that time, Israel was ruled by evil king Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. Jezebel had been high priestess of Asherah in her native country of Phoenicia. As Ahab's wife, she used all her power and influence to establish the worship of Baal and Asherah in Israel. When most of the people in the kingdom apostatized, God sent a severe drought to punish them. The drought had lasted three and one-half years when Elijah called the priests of Baal to Mt. Carmel. Notice how Baal's priests attempted to bring rain: "If the land was dry or if a drought ensued, the priests enacted other mimetic rites, simulating rain by **slashing their bodies with knives until the blood gushed out**. This was to show Baal how he should pour rain upon the fields. Meanwhile, they chanted, 'Where is the victor Baal, where is the prince lord of the earth? The virgin earth is awaiting him!' " (Ibid., p. 16., emphasis added.)

After many hours of ritualistic bloodletting, Baal's priests had to acknowledge defeat. Baal had not responded to their pleas. Then Elijah prepared a sacrifice and offered a brief prayer to God. God answered with fire from heaven that consumed both the sacrifice and the altar. This miracle turned the hearts of the Israelites back to God—but only for a time. It was too easy to yield to temptation, when it was all around them.

Since the 15th day of the first month was a pagan feast day as well as a holy day of God, the Israelites were continually being tempted to combine the pagan festivities with their worship of God. Those idolatrous Israelites who succumbed to the temptation undoubtedly felt they were serving God while practicing these pagan customs. Had not God commanded that the 15th of the first month be observed as a feast day? Was it not a day to offer sacrifices and

to celebrate with a religious banquet? That is exactly what they were doing! They were sacrificing at the temple of God in Jerusalem—but they were sacrificing to other gods. They justified themselves by claiming that they were the people that God had delivered—God's chosen people. The prophet Jeremiah condemned them for this hypocrisy:

"Do not trust in lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are *these*'....Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know; and then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say. '**We are delivered to do all these abominations**'?" (Jer. 7:4, 8-10).

Yes, the people of Israel justified themselves and their evil practices by claiming that they were the people that God had delivered, and therefore God approved of what they were doing. What was it they were doing? They were walking after other gods and offering sacrifices to Baal in the very house of God! As Jeremiah shows, they were also worshiping the queen of heaven and making cake offerings for her (verse 18). They had forsaken their covenant with the true Lord of heaven and earth and were no longer offering sacrifices to Him. God sent Isaiah to condemn them with this message from His lips: "Nor have you filled Me *with* the fat of your sacrifices; but you have made Me serve with your sins; you have wearied Me with your iniquities" (Isa. 43:24).

God Punished Israel for Their Pagan Observances

God was angry with the people of Israel for defiling His sabbaths and holy days and then justifying their sins by saying that they had been delivered by God and were free to do these things. The idolatrous Israelites had replaced God's ordinances with the pagan customs of the nations around them. Satan had inspired these heathen nations to celebrate their pagan days in honor of false gods on the same days that the true God had commanded for the observance of His festivals! To the Israelites who observed these days God proclaimed, "**Your new moons** and **your appointed feast** MY SOUL HATES; they are a trouble to Me; I am weary to bear *them*" (Isa. 1:14).

Note: This same condemnation applies today to holidays that are called Christian but are in reality of pagan origin—Christmas, Easter, and other holidays and saints' days of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. It applies as well to the days that are observed by the Moslems, Hindus, and Buddhists, and all other religious observances that are not sanctified by God in the Scriptures.

Although the ten tribes of Israel had grievously provoked God with their idolatries, He gave them many years in which to repent before He executed His judgments. The division of the twelve tribes into the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah occurred in approximately 970 BC. For the

next 252 years, with some minor revivals, the people in the northern kingdom of Israel reduced themselves morally and religiously into abject corruption. As punishment for their sins, God sent the Assyrians, who conquered them and took them captive. The Assyrians removed them from the land of Israel and made them dwell in the area known today as the Caucasus, east of the Black Sea. The descendants of the ten tribes of Israel never returned to their former homeland. Centuries later, many of these Israelites migrated westward into Europe and the British Isles and became known as the Anglo-Saxons.

The second book of Kings gives the last Old Testament record of the ten-tribed kingdom of Israel: "Now it came to pass because the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, Who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which the nations had made. **Now the children of Israel secretly did things that *were* not right against the LORD their God.** And they built high places [to worship other gods] in all their cities for themselves from the Watch Tower to the fortified city. And they set up images and groves for themselves [phallic symbols representing Nimrod] and Asherim [representing Semiramis] in every high hill, and under every green tree. And they burned incense in all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had removed from before them, and they practiced evil things to provoke the LORD to anger, for they served the idols of which the LORD had said to them. 'You shall not do this thing.' And the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all the prophet, by all the seer, saying,

" 'Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets'. **Nevertheless they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like the neck of their fathers who did not believe in the LORD their God. And *they* rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warning that He testified against them.** And they went after vanity, and became vain, and went after the nations around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them not to do like them. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God and made molten images, two calves for themselves. And they made a grove, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire. And they used divination and sorceries, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight; no one was left, only the tribe of Judah.

"**Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes which Israel made**. And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers until He had cast them out of His sight. For He tore [separated] Israel from the house of David and they made Jeroboam the son

of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did. They did not depart from them until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight as He had said by all His servants the prophets..." (II Kings 17:7-23).

This summary of the idolatrous sins of the people of Israel shows the abominable practices that they adopted in place of God's commandments and ordinances for His feast days. Their descent into the depraved worship of the heathen around them was aided by the fact that the chief pagan festivals were observed on exactly the same calendar days as God's holy days.

The books of Kings and Chronicles contain many accounts of the horrible paganism and abject debauchery into which the children of Israel degenerated, in giving themselves over to Baal and Asherah worship. It would be very instructive to read the entire account of the history of Israel and Judah as recorded in the Old Testament.

As evil as were the idolatries of the ten tribes of Israel, they were surpassed by the sins of the people of Judah, ancestors of the Jews. In Chapter Twelve, we will learn how rampant paganism in the kingdom of Judah led to the changes that were instituted in the Passover observance. The Scriptural evidence will show that the idolatrous practices of the ancient Jews were directly responsible for the institution of the temple-centered Passover.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHEN AND WHY THE TEMPLE SACRIFICE OF THE PASSOVER WAS INSTITUTED

When was the Passover sacrifice changed from the domestic killing of the lamb at the beginning of the 14th to the temple sacrifice of the lamb toward the end of the 14th? Why did this change take place? Was it done in willful rebellion against God? If the change was not made in rebellion and defiance, what were the reasons for changing the Passover? Who instituted the change? Was the change commanded by the kings of Judah, or did a mass movement by the people bring about the change?

The answer to these questions can be found in the Scriptural records of the history of the kingdom of Judah.

The Jews' Treacherous Rebellion Against God

In the previous chapter, we learned that it was Baal and Asherah worship which brought God's judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel and led to the captivity of its people. Rather than hearing and fearing, repenting of their idolatries and returning to God, the people of Judah, ancestors of the Jews, multiplied their evil and did far worse than the people of Israel! God did not take their unfaithfulness lightly. Although Israel had been the first to sin, Judah received the greater condemnation:

"...Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and has played the harlot there. And I said after she had done all these *things*, 'She will return to Me! But she did not return. And **her treacherous sister Judah** [the kingdom of Judah] saw it. And I saw, when for all causes *for* which backsliding Israel committed adultery, I sent her away and gave a bill of divorce to her, yet her **treacherous sister Judah** did not fear; but she went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the folly of her whoredom, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but with deception,' says the LORD. And the LORD said to me, 'The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah' " (Jer. 3:6-11).

The people of Judah forsook their covenant with God and went whoring after the gods of the nations around, just as the northern ten tribes of Israel had done. The kings of Judah forsook the righteous ways of their ancestor David and followed in the evil footsteps of King Jeroboam of Israel.

Periods of Repentance and Backsliding

During the reigns of righteous kings, there were periods of repentance and returning to God. In II Chronicles 15, we read of the repentance

of the people of Judah in the days of King Asa: "And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul....and sought Him with their whole desire. And He was found by them....But the high places were not taken away out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was perfect all his days" (verses 12, 15, 17).

Later, Asa's son Jehoshaphat was also accepted by God: "And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the first ways of his father David and did not seek to the Baalim. But he sought to the God of his father, and walked in His commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel (II Chron. 17:3-4).

Although Jehoshaphat served God, his obedience was not perfect. In II Chronicles 20 we read, "And he walked in the way of Asa his father and did not depart from it, doing *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD. Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts to the God of their fathers" (verses 32-33).

Jehoshaphat did not obey God's laws fully and completely, but because he set his heart to obey, God overlooked his shortcomings. Despite his righteous leadership, the people of Judah did not fully repent of their idolatries. As we have read, they did not "prepare their hearts to the God of their fathers." They were led back into the depths of paganism by Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram, who walked in the ways of Jeroboam and all the wicked kings of Israel (II Chron. 21:6).

Some of the kings who ruled afterwards were even more wicked than Jehoram, and the people followed them in their abominable practices. One of the most evil and wicked kings of Judah was King Ahaz. The Scriptural account of his reign reveals a degeneracy and idolatry that was in some ways more evil than Manasseh, his grandson. As the account shows, Ahaz "...walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and also made molded images for the Baals. And he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom **and burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations** whom the LORD had cast out before the sons of Israel" (II Chron. 28:2-3).

The statement that Ahaz "burnt his children in the fire" means that he offered his children as a sacrifice to the fire god Molech. The flesh of his children was probably eaten by the priests of Molech. God punished Ahaz for his wicked and abominable practices, but Ahaz refused to repent and instead went deeper into idolatry:

"And he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every leafy tree. And the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. And they struck him and carried away a great *number into* captivity and brought *them* to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great slaughter....For the LORD brought Judah low...**For he had promoted wickedness in Judah, and had sinned grievously against the LORD**. And

Tilgath Pilneser king of Assyria came to him and troubled him, but did not strengthen him. For Ahaz took away a portion *of* the house of the LORD, and *of* the house of the king, and *of* the princes, and gave *it* to the king of Assyria. But *it was* no help to him.

"And in the time of his distress **he trespassed even more against the LORD**, this same king Ahaz, for he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus who struck him. And he said, 'Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them so that they may help me.' But they were the ruin of him..." (II Chron. 28:4-5, 19-23).

During Ahaz' reign, paganism was rife. Ahaz shut up the temple of God, and took the gold of the temple and its vessels of gold to make idols and images of other gods, filling Jerusalem and the entire land of Judah with his abominations. Ahaz's idolatry continued until the day of his death:

"And Ahaz gathered the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD. And *he* made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in each separate city of Judah he [Ahaz] made high places [shrines and temples to Baalim] to burn incense to other gods and provoked the LORD....And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem….And his son Hezekiah reigned in his place " (II Chron. 28:24-27).

The Revival of Judah under Hezekiah

Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz as king of Judah. Unlike his wicked father Ahaz, Hezekiah worshiped the Lord, following the righteous example of his ancestor David. Hezekiah brought about a tremendous revival in Judah, turning the people back to God and restoring the temple so that sacrifices could again be offered to Him:

"Hezekiah began to reign *being* twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And **he did what was right in the sight of the LORD**, according to all that David his father had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. And *he* brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them into the east street. And he said to them, 'Hear me, Levites now sanctify yourselves and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers and carry the filthiness out of the holy *place*!

"For our fathers have sinned and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the dwelling place of the LORD, and have turned *their* backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the sanctuary to the God of Israel. Therefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing as you see with your eyes. For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and

our daughters and our wives *are* in captivity for this. And *it is* in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us' " (II Chron. 29:1-10).

As King Hezekiah had commanded, the priests and Levites completely cleansed and sanctified the temple, but not in time to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month. The Scriptures record that "...they began to sanctify on the first *day* of the first month. And on the eighth day of the month they came to the porch of the LORD. And they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days, and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end" (verse 17).

When the cleansing of the temple was completed, Hezekiah reinstituted the temple service with a command that sin offerings be made for all Israel. When these had been offered, the whole congregation brought thank offerings and burnt offerings. So abundant were the sacrifices that the priests could not do all the work, and the Levites were called upon to assist them. The king and all the people rejoiced in this renewal of the temple service:

"...And the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people, for the thing happened suddenly" (verses 35-36).

The Epochal Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread of Hezekiah

Because the temple was not ready in time to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month, Hezekiah and the people decided to observe them in the second month, according to God's instructions in Numbers 9. After taking counsel with the princes and the elders who represented the people, here is what the king proposed. Notice his leadership in establishing the decree:

"And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem **to keep the Passover** to the LORD God of Israel. And the king and his leaders, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, took counsel to keep **the Passover in the second month**. For they could not keep it at that time because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, nor had the people gathered to Jerusalem. And **the thing pleased the king and all the congregation**. And they established a decree to send a notice throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come **to keep the Passover** to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, for they had not done it in large numbers as it was written" (II Chron. 30:1-5).

Although many kings had reigned in Israel and Judah, the Passover observance in Hezekiah's time is the first account of the Passover being kept as a major feast. During Solomon's reign, the Feast of Tabernacles is recorded as the major feast that was celebrated by the people. During Hezekiah's reign, the emphasis shifted from the fall festival season to the spring festival season.

As we learn how the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were celebrated in the days of King Hezekiah, we will notice some significant changes from the ordinances that God had delivered at Israel's first Passover. These changes were instituted by the command of the king in his zeal to abolish idolatry from the land and to restore the worship of the true God at the temple. Although the prophet Isaiah lived during Hezekiah's reign, it was the king who ordered the restoration of the temple. He was the one who commanded that the temple be cleansed by the priests and Levites. He was the one who revived the temple service and commanded that sacrifices be made to God. He was the driving force behind the observance of the Passover in Jerusalem and that renewal of the covenant with God.

In the times before Hezekiah, it was the judge or the king who administered civil affairs, and the priests who administered religious matters. During the days of Samuel, God combined the office of prophet, priest and judge in the one person of Samuel. It was separated again when Saul was made king, with the priests administering the religious matters and the king the civil affairs. The Scriptures show that the prophet and/or chief priest had authority over the king in spiritual matters, as in the case of David and his sin with Bathsheba. The prophet Nathan corrected David for his sins and pronounced the punishment of the Lord against David. Although David composed many psalms that were sung by the Levites, and helped Samuel institute the courses of the priests, he never exerted authority over the priesthood.

By the time of Hezekiah, the people had fallen into grievous idolatry, and the sacrifices to God at the temple had ceased. Hezekiah was moved to use his authority as king to restore the temple service of the priests and Levites. In this endeavor, Hezekiah did not usurp authority over the priesthood. He did not attempt to perform any priestly duties, as King Uzziah had done, and had provoked God's immediate judgment. But Hezekiah was determined to restore the worship of God in Judah, and he made sure that the priests did their jobs! This use of his kingly power is an important event which helped lay the groundwork for changes in the observance of the Passover.

Before we study the account of Hezekiah's Passover in II Chronicles 30, it is important for us to understand that Ezra was the one who wrote the books of Chronicles, as part of his work in compiling and editing the Old Testament records. Although Hezekiah's Passover took place about one hundred years before the captivity of Judah, Ezra did not record it until after the Jews had returned from their Babylonian captivity. As we will see, Ezra had a specific reason to highlight the Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah in his accounts in II Chronicles, although they receive little or no mention in the parallel accounts in II Kings.

In his account of Hezekiah's Passover, Ezra records that "the runners went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah...**according to the commandment of the king**..." (II Chron. 30:6).

Ezra's statement makes it clear that the king was in charge of this undertaking. Although the Scriptures make provision for observing the Passover in the second month, the emphasis is that it would be observed "according to the commandment of the king."

In response to Hezekiah's command to come to Jerusalem for the Passover, Ezra records that "...many people gathered at Jerusalem **to keep the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*** in the second month..." (verse 13). This is the first Scriptural record in which the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover are used interchangeably in referring to the spring festival season (verses 1-2, 13). In the days of Hezekiah, the term "Passover" had not yet been established as a name for the entire eight-day observance, as later practiced by the Jews.

As we continue to study the account in II Chronicles, we will see that Hezekiah's Passover is the first record in Scripture of killing the lambs at the temple. Although Ezra's account does not state the time that the lambs were slain, it appears that they were slain during the day portion of the 14th.

This Passover observance, which occurred approximately 780 years after the Passover in Egypt, is the first indication in Scripture of the Passover lambs being slain during the day portion of the 14th. This is also **the first Scriptural record of killing the Passover at the temple** and dashing the blood of the lamb against the altar instead of applying the blood to the door posts at home, as was done with the domestic sacrifice of the lamb.

Why did Hezekiah institute these changes in the observance of the Passover?

When we consider the idolatrous history of the people of Israel and Judah, it is not surprising that Hezekiah decreed that the Passover be observed at the temple in Jerusalem. In view of the people's deep-seated, habitual attraction to Baal and Asherah, and their longstanding practice of worshiping these pagan deities, **the children of Israel and Judah could not be trusted to keep the Passover at home!** Any sacrificing they did at home might have been offered to Baal, because that is what they were accustomed to doing. Instead of eating the Passover meal in commemoration of the passing over of the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, as God had commanded, they might have eaten the communal meal in dedication to the god Baal.

Few in our modern times realize that the pagans had a feast to celebrate Baal's exploits on the 15th of Nisan, the first month of the year, on the very day that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins. The pagans also observed the feast of Ishtar, or Easter, in the springtime in honor of the queen of heaven, Semiramis. Knowing how powerfully the people were tempted to participate in these pagan festivals, it is easy to understand why King Hezekiah commanded the priests, the Levites, and the people of Israel and Judah to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread at the temple

in Jerusalem. He had personally sought God. He had personally made a covenant with God in his heart. If it were not for him, the remnant of Israel and the people of Judah would have continued their abominable Baal and Asherah worship!

Continuing with Ezra's account in II Chronicles 30, we read, "And many people gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened *Bread* in the second month, a very great congregation. And they arose and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense *to other gods* they took away, and cast *them* into the Brook Kidron.

"And **they killed the Passover, on the fourteenth *day*** of the second month. And the priests and the Levites were ashamed and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD. And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God. **The priests sprinkled the blood** from the hand of the Levites. For many in the congregation *were* not sanctified. And **the Levites were over the killing of the Passover lambs for everyone *who* was not clean** *in order* to sanctify them unto the LORD" (verses 13-17).

Verse 15 tells us that "they killed the Passover [lamb], on the fourteenth *day* of the second month." Does this mean that they killed the Passover lambs at the beginning of the 14th, observing a domestic Passover?

When we examine the full account of Hezekiah's Passover, we find no indication that the Passover lambs were killed at the beginning of the 14th, "between the two evenings," as commanded in Exodus 12. Since *ben ha arbayim* is not used in II Chronicles 30, it is evident that the Passover lambs that were slain at the temple were not killed in accordance with God's command for a domestic observance. There is not one detail in the account which resembles the domestic observance that is recorded in Exodus 12. To the contrary, the account in II Chronicles 30 points out the changes that were instituted for the temple sacrifice of the Passover. The lambs that were killed at the temple were slain by the Levites, not by "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel," as in Exodus 12. The account in II Chronicles is not describing a domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs by the people, but a temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs by the Levites. Although some of the people of Israel and Judah had sanctified themselves, and were able to kill their own lambs at the temple with the assistance of the Levites, the majority of the lambs were slain by the Levites because of the uncleanness of the people.

The account also records that the blood of the Passover lambs was dashed against the altar. The fact that the priests dashed the blood against the altar is additional evidence that the lambs were not killed "between the two evenings," or *ben ha arbayim*. Since Hezekiah had reinstituted the temple sacrifices, the evening burnt offering would have been on the altar. God had commanded that it be offered *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings." The priests could not dash the blood of the Passover lambs against the altar while the evening sacrifice was being offered. Because Hezekiah's Passover was centered at the temple, the killing of the Passover lambs could

not be conducted at the beginning of the 14th, during the time called *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings."

The account shows that burnt offerings were offered on the altar at the time that the Passover lambs were killed. Verse 15 records that "...the priests and the Levites were ashamed and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD." The sanctification had to be accomplished before the Passover, or these priests and Levites could not have participated in the slaying of the Passover lambs. II Chronicles 29:12-36 gives a detailed account of the cleansing of the temple and of the priests and Levites. The account states that after sanctifying the temple, the priests and Levites offered sin offerings and burnt offerings. The people also brought burnt offerings and thank offerings, as well as peace offerings and drink offerings (verses 31, 35).

The Levites must have slain the Passover lambs at the temple in accordance with the instructions for offering a peace offering or a thank offering, because there are no instructions in the law of Moses for killing the Passover lambs at the temple. The commands of God for peace offerings are found in the book of Leviticus:

"And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD *is* of the flocks, male or female, he shall bring it without blemish. If he is bringing near a sheep for his offering, then he shall bring it near before the LORD. And *he* [the offerer] shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it [slit the animal's throat] before the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood all around against the side of the alter" (Lev. 3:6-8).

As the account in II Chronicles 30 shows, this was the manner in which the Passover lambs were killed at the temple. In Verse 16 we read, "And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God...." Since there are no instructions in the law of Moses concerning the killing of Passover lambs at the tabernacle or temple, it is evident that the priests and Levites were in their proper places at the altar for serving according to God's commands for peace offerings. The details that are given in the account of Hezekiah's Passover clearly show that the priests and Levites were following the instructions for the offering of a peace offering when they killed the Passover lambs at the temple. As we read in Verse 16, "...the priests sprinkled the blood [against the altar], from the hand of the Levites." This was the exact manner in which peace offerings were sacrificed, as recorded in Leviticus 3:6-8.

Here is the procedure that was carried out at the temple for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs: The man who brought the lamb to the temple would himself kill the lamb by slitting its throat. The Levites in attendance would catch the blood in a bowl and pass it to the priest, who would sprinkle it against the base of the altar of burnt offerings. This was the usual procedure for the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs, as verified by historical records of the temple service. However, the account in II Chronicles

30 records that at the first temple observance of the Passover in Hezekiah's day, the Levites themselves killed many of the Passover lambs. In Verse 17 we read, "For **many** in the congregation *were* not sanctified. And the **Levites were over the killing the Passover lambs** for everyone *who was* not clean..."

Because many of the people were ceremonially unclean, they were forbidden by God's laws to eat the Passover. But God graciously overlooked their uncleanness and allowed them to partake of it: "For many of the people, many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, **but did ate the Passover otherwise than it was written**. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary.' And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness..." (verses 18-21).

Let's analyze the major differences between Hezekiah's Passover and the first observance of the Passover by the children of Israel, which took place 777 years earlier:

> 1) Hezekiah's Passover was observed according to the command of the king, not according to the ordinance of God.
> 2) There is no mention of killing the lambs at *ben ha arbayim*, as was done at the Passover in Egypt.
> 3) Hezekiah's Passover was centered at the temple; there is no mention of a domestic observance at all.
> 4) The Levites killed the lambs for the people who were not clean, and assisted those who were clean.
> 5) The Levites passed the blood to the priests, who sprinkled the blood against the altar.
> 6) Even the unclean were allowed to eat the Passover, contrary to the ordinance of God.
> 7) The manner in which this Passover was observed was the king's responsibility. It was King Hezekiah who prayed for the people, not the priests.

As stated earlier, this Passover in the days of King Hezekiah is the first record in Scripture of a Passover being sacrificed at the temple in Jerusalem. Most certainly, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were kept by David, and by Solomon before he turned his back on God and did evil. Yet the Scriptures do not record any observance of the Passover at the temple during the reigns of David and Solomon. Neither is there any Scriptural record of a Passover being kept at the tabernacle in Shiloh, before the temple was built. The account of Hezekiah's Passover is the first record of a centralized Passover observance in all the history of Israel and Judah! Though it was a Passover to God, it was observed in an entirely different manner than God had commanded in the ordinances in Exodus 12.

When we understand the idolatrous history of Israel and Judah, it is evident that Hezekiah instituted the temple-centered Passover because the people could not be trusted to keep the Passover at home. They had strayed far from God and had rejected His commandments and laws, and they were so steeped in Baal and Asherah worship that it was not feasible to allow them to keep a domestic Passover. The only place that they could be trusted to keep the Passover to honor God, and not pollute it with Baal and Asherah worship, was in Jerusalem under the strict supervision of the king, the priests and the Levites. Although this temple-centered Passover did not conform to the Passover commands in Exodus 12, it was necessary for the children of Israel and Judah to keep the Passover in this manner to ensure the worship of the true God and to prevent the Passover from being polluted with pagan practices.

Ezra's account in II Chronicles 30 shows that God accepted this temple-centered Passover, although it was contrary to the ordinances that He had established, because of the prayers of Hezekiah and the repentance of the people. But God's acceptance of this Passover does not mean that He intended this type of Passover to replace the domestic Passover. The commands for the domestic observance of the Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12, were still in effect. Consider this: If the ordinances of the Passover were not in effect at that time, there would have been no need for Hezekiah to pray for forgiveness for those who ate the Passover contrary to God's requirements. God's acceptance of this Passover did not nullify the commands that He gave to the children of Israel in Egypt. These commands were established by God as lasting ordinances for the observance of the Passover.

The temple-centered observance of the Passover was a result of the degenerate spiritual condition of the people. The people had descended to the depths of idolatry during the reigns of the wicked kings of Israel and Judah, and the land was filled with pagan abominations. It is likely that God would soon have banished these idolatrous people to captivity at the hands of their enemies if righteous King Hezekiah had not begun his reforms. Although the **temple-centered Passover that was instituted by Hezekiah was a necessity, it did not change the Passover ordinances of God**.

The observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign was without precedent. This was the first time that the Passover had been kept at the temple! It was also the first time in many years that the Feast of Unleavened Bread had been observed in Jerusalem, as the Scriptures record:

"And they ate the appointed things seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers. And the whole congregation took counsel to keep another seven days. And they kept *another* seven days with gladness....And there was great joy in Jerusalem, **for since the days of Solomon the son of David, the king of Israel, *there was* nothing like this in Jerusalem**" (II Chron. 30:22-26).

Hezekiah's revival of the worship of God at the temple led to a great destruction of pagan images and the elimination of idolatrous worship during

his reign: "And when all this was finished [the Passover and the extended observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread], all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, also in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, each to his possession, into their own cities" (II Chron. 31:1).

It may seem surprising that the account of Hezekiah's life in II Kings 18-20 makes no mention of this epochal Passover. However, it is explained by the fact that the two books of Kings did not have the same author as the books of I and II Chronicles. While Ezra wrote the books of Chronicles, he only edited I and II Kings as he was compiling and canonizing the Old Testament. Because the books of Chronicles were recorded much later than the books of Kings, they give us a different perspective of the history of Israel and Judah. Ezra's account of Hezekiah's Passover in II Chronicles 30 is the first record of a temple-centered Passover in all the years of Old Testament history. Later, we will see that Ezra had a great deal to do with institutionalizing the temple observance of the Passover.

In Chapter Thirteen, we will continue to study the Scriptural records of the observance of the Passover, and we will learn more about the change from a domestic Passover to a temple-centered Passover. We will learn why Josiah, who became king of Judah seventy-five years after Hezekiah, commanded a temple observance of the Passover during his reign.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WHEN AND WHY THE TEMPLE SACRIFICE OF THE PASSOVER WAS INSTITUTED—PART TWO

The first Passover that the children of Israel observed was purely a domestic observance, as recorded in Exodus 12. The second Passover, which took place in the wilderness, was observed in exactly the same manner, as were all the Passovers that were kept during the forty years of wandering (Num. 9). From the time that the children of Israel entered the Promised Land until the time they were carried away to captivity in Babylon, we find only two occurrences in Scripture of a Passover that was not a domestic observance. In the previous chapter, we studied the first Passover observance that was centered at the temple, which took place during Hezekiah's reign. The second such observance took place in the days of King Josiah. This second temple-centered Passover was preceded by the longest period of idolatry and paganism in the entire history of Judah, when the people were led to the depths of depravity by wicked King Manasseh. The Scriptural account of Manasseh's reign clearly depicts the historical setting that led to the temple-centered Passover observance during the reign of Josiah.

The Debaucheries of Manasseh

Manasseh was the son of King Hezekiah. As the Bible has repeatedly recorded, the son of a righteous king often turned from his father's ways and became terribly evil. Such was the case with Manasseh. He was undoubtedly the worst and most evil king in all the history of Israel and Judah. His reign is significant because it set the stage for the reforms of Josiah. The Scriptures give the following account of Manasseh's wicked practices:

"Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign. And he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hephzibah. And he did *that which* was evil in the sight of the LORD after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel for he built up again the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed. And he erected altars for Baal and made a grove as Ahab king of Israel did. And he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD of which the LORD said, 'In Jerusalem I will put My name.'

"Then he built altars for all the host of the heavens in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he made his son through the fire [in the valley of the son of Hinnom] and observed times and used witchcraft. And dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. He worked much wickedness in the sight of the LORD to provoke *Him* to anger. And he set a graven image of the grove which he had made in the house of...the LORD....And Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations ever did whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

"And the LORD spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, 'Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, doing more wickedly than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore, thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Behold, I *am* bringing evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, so that whoever hears of it both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the measuring line of the house of Ahab. And I will wipe Jerusalem as a dish is wiped, wiping and turning *it* upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies. And they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; because they **have done what is evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt even until this day**.'

"Furthermore, Manasseh also shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah to sin in doing the evil in the sight of the LORD" (II Kings 21:1-16).

In the entire history of Israel and Judah, never was there a more depraved society than that created by Manasseh. The Scriptures have preserved the record of the gross evils and idolatries personally committed by Manasseh in defiling the temple with his idols and passing his children through the fire to Molech—an abominable practice which he seduced the people into following. Such vile behavior causes our minds to recoil when we picture those horrible scenes. But the sins of Manasseh and his people were not the first to provoke God's wrath. A key point made in this narration of Manasseh's reign is the fact that the children of Israel and Judah had been provoking God to anger from the day they left Egypt. This factor must be borne in mind as we begin to study the revival instituted by Josiah and the account of his temple-centered Passover.

Josiah's Revival

After Manasseh died, his 22-year-old son Amon reigned for two years. Amon was as wicked and evil as his father. His evil reign ended when "...his servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house. But the people of the land killed all those who conspired against King Amon. And the people of the land **made his son Josiah** to reign in his stead" (II Chron. 33:24-25).

Early in his reign, Josiah forsook the idolatrous practices of his wicked father Amon and began to worship the Lord, following the righteous example of his ancestor David: "Josiah *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and did not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek after the God of David his father. And in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the

molten images. And they broke down the altars of Baalim in his presence. And he cut down the images, which *were* on high above them, and the groves. And the carved images and the molten images he also broke in pieces, and made dust *from them*, and scattered *it* upon the graves of the ones who had sacrificed to them. And he burned the bones of the priests upon their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem" (II Chron. 34:1-5).

This account shows the extensive work that Josiah had to perform to rid the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judah of all the false gods, images and idols. Additional details of Josiah's cleansing of the land are recorded in II Kings 23.

When the cleansing of the land was completed, Josiah undertook to repair the house of God. As the work was beginning, Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law, which had been lost for many years. Shaphan the scribe reported the finding of the book to King Josiah. When Shaphan read the commands of God, and the curses that would befall those who disobeyed, Josiah rent his clothes in anguish and repentance. He commanded Hilkiah and Shaphan to go to Huldah the prophetess, who was also the keeper of the wardrobe in Jerusalem, to ask the word of the LORD concerning all the curses pronounced against the people and the land because of their sins. Here is the message which the Lord sent back to Josiah:

" 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel *concerning* the words you have heard, "Because your heart *was* tender and you humbled yourself before your God when you heard His words against this place and against its people, and humbled yourself before Me, and tore your clothes and wept before Me, I have even heard *you* also," says the LORD. "Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, nor shall your eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place and upon its people." ' And they brought the king word again" (II Chron. 34:26-28).

After receiving this message, Josiah in his zeal made a covenant with God, and he compelled all the leaders and the people of Judah to enter into this covenant. Just as Hezekiah had done, Josiah used the authority and power of his kingship to ensure that the people would serve the Lord their God. In view of the impending judgment of God, the kingdom of Judah was in a state of national emergency, and Josiah acted accordingly. Because he sought God with all his heart and turned the people from their grievous idolatry, God's judgment upon the nation was postponed. The Scriptural account shows the wholehearted manner in which Josiah sought the Lord:

"And the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people from the great to *the* small. And he read in their ears all the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

"And **he caused all who were found in Jerusalem and in Benjamin, and the people of Jerusalem, to stand *to it*** according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. **And Josiah took away all the abominations** out of all the territories that *belonged* to the children of Israel. And he **made** [he personally saw to the enforcement of this covenant] **all that were present in Israel to serve, *even* to serve the LORD their God**. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD, the God of their fathers" (verses 29-33).

After establishing this covenant with God, Josiah began a tremendous reform, purging the land of all pagan images and idols. The cleansing of the land began with the temple in Jerusalem. The account of this cleansing, as recorded in II Kings 23, shows how terribly the people of Judah had polluted the very house of God. The account is given here to show the depths of spiritual wretchedness and moral degradation to which the people had descended during Manasseh's and Amon's wicked reigns:

"And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels which were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven. And he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried the ashes of them to Bethel. And he removed the idol-worshiping priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn *incense* in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places around Jerusalem. He also removed those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of the heavens.

"And he brought out the Asherah image from the house of the LORD outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped *it* to powder, and threw the powder of it upon the graves of the children of the people. And he broke down the houses of the sodomites [homosexuals, male and female], which *were* by the house of the LORD, where the women wove coverings for the grove. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah and defiled the high places where the priests had burned *incense*, from Geba to Beer-sheba. And he broke down the high places of the gates....And he defiled Topheth, in the valley of the children of Hinnom, so that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech" (II Kings 23:4-10).

Josiah thoroughly purged the temple grounds and the entire area of Jerusalem of all idolatrous altars and pagan images: "And the altars which *were* on the top of the upper room of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king ripped them down from there, and smashed them. And he threw the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the high places which *were* before Jerusalem on the right hand of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled. And he broke the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men" (verses 12-14).

Then Josiah fulfilled the prophecy given in I Kings 13 of the destruction of the altar at Bethel, which Jeroboam had built and dedicated: "Moreover the altar that *was* at Bethel, *and* the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down, and burned the high place; he stamped it to powder, and burned the groves. Then as Josiah turned, he observed the tombs which *were* there in the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs, and burned *them* upon the altar and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God had proclaimed, who had foretold these things....And also all the houses of the high places in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the LORD* to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the works that he had done in Bethel. And upon the altars he killed all the priests of the high places *which were* there, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem" (II Kings 23:15-20).

Josiah's Passover

The account of Josiah's reign in II Chronicles 34 shows that the cleansing of the entire land of Judah was completed in six years (verses 3, 8). As great as this task had been, Josiah knew that it would be an even greater task to purge the hearts of the people of their deep-seated idolatrous mindset.

As in the time of Hezekiah, Josiah called for a mandatory Passover to be kept at Jerusalem. This was an emergency measure to avert the curses God had pronounced because of the people's sins. It was a call for national repentance and a return to God! This Passover was to be supervised by the priests and the Levites in Jerusalem to ensure that the people did not return to their habitual paganism. Let us examine the Scriptural account of this centralized Passover: "**And Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem. And they killed the Passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month**" (II Chron. 35:1).

As in the account of Hezekiah's Passover, we again find that "they killed the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month." And, as in the first account of a centralized Passover, the phrase *ben ha arbayim*, or "between the two evenings," is not included. The following verses indicate that the account is describing an observance on the daytime portion of the 14th. The description of the sacrificing does not fit the ordinances that God established for the domestic observance of the Passover. There is no mention of the lambs being killed by "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel," as in Exodus 12. Rather, the account gives a detailed description of the slaying of the lambs at the temple by the Levites, and the sprinkling of the lamb's blood against the altar by the priests. The missing phrase *ben ha arbayim*, and the fact that the entire narration is centered at the temple, shows that the sacrificing was conducted on the day portion of the 14th, in preparation for an observance on the night of the 15th.

A later statement in the Scriptural account shows that the sacrifices were not eaten until the night of the 15th. The account tells us that the

priests had so many sacrifices to prepare that they "were *busy* offering up the burnt offerings and the fat until nightfall" (verse 14). The fact that the sacrifices were not completed "until night" shows that the people did not eat them on the day portion of the 14th, but on the night of the 15th.

As we read the account in II Chronicles 35, we find that the entire ceremony was conducted by the priests and Levites, who stood in their places to serve at the altar, offering sacrifices and carrying out all the duties that were assigned to their courses (verses 2-5). Notice Josiah's exhortation to the Levites: " 'And kill the Passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren so that *they* may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.' And Josiah gave to the people from the flock, lambs and kids, all for the Passover offerings, for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand oxen. These *were* from what the king owned" (verses 6-7).

This verse is significant because bullocks and oxen were never to be used for the Passover sacrifice. God had commanded that the animals for the Passover sacrifice be selected from the sheep or the goats (Ex. 12:5). The bullocks that Josiah gave to the people were not for the Passover sacrifice itself. These "Passover offerings," were to be sacrificed by the priests and Levites as burnt offerings, peace offerings and thank offerings. The priests received "...for the Passover offerings two thousand six hundred *sheep*, and three hundred oxen." And the Levites received "...for Passover offerings five thousand *sheep*, and five hundred oxen" (II Chron. 35:8-9).

These animals from both the flock and the herd were offered as burnt offerings, peace offerings and thank offerings. They were offered on the night of the 15th and each day during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The fact that they are called "Passover offerings" indicates that during this time in history, the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread began to be called "Passover."

As the account shows, the lambs were brought to the temple to be sacrificed by the priests and the Levites, and the blood of the lambs was sprinkled against the altar in the manner that was practiced for peace offerings and thank offerings. This was done by Josiah's command: "So the service was prepared, and **the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment. And they killed the Passover *offerings*, and the priests sprinkled *the blood*** from their hands, and the Levites flayed *them* [cut them open and removed the guts]. **And they removed the burnt** offerings [the interior fat and genital organs] so that they might give, according to the divisions of the families of the people, **to offer to the LORD as *it is* written in the book of Moses; and so they did to the oxen**" (verses 10-12).

The sacrificing that was performed by the priests and Levites in this account was not conducted according to the ordinances that God gave to Moses for the observance of the Passover. The Passover ordinances that God delivered to Moses are recorded in the book of Exodus, which is the

second book in the Pentateuch, or the "Book of the Law." These ordinances of God do not instruct the priests and Levites to sacrifice the Passover lambs and sprinke the blood on the altar, nor to burn the fat and other parts. The phrase "as it is written in the book of Moses" is not referring to the ordinances for the Passover, but to the ordinances that God established for peace offerings, which required that the blood of the sacrificial animal be sprinkled against the altar, and the fat and certain organs be burnt on the altar (Lev. 3). The manner in which the lambs at Josiah's Passover were killed conforms to God's requirements for peace offerings and thank offerings, which were always sacrificed by the Levites and priests. The oxen were sacrificed in the same manner as the lambs, with the exception that these larger animals were cut into portions.

After relating the sacrifice of the lambs and the oxen, the account describes the manner in which they were cooked: "And they **roasted** [Hebrew *bashal*] the passover with fire according to the ordinance; and the **holy offerings sod** [Hebrew *bashal*] **they** in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the children of the people" (verse 13, *JPSA*).

Notice that the Hebrew word *bashal* is used twice in this verse, and is translated both "roasted" and sod." While it is wholly correct to translate *bashal* as "sod," meaning "boiled," it is not at all correct to translate *bashal* as "roasted." Bashal is used in Scripture to denote the action of cooking, and, specifically, cooking by boiling in water (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*).

Bashal is never used to signify the act of roasting. The use of the word "roasted" in II Chronicles 35:13 is a blatant mistranslation of the Hebrew text. *Bashal* is first used in this verse to indicate that the sacrifices were cooked over fire, and then to specify that the cooking was done by boiling the flesh of the animals in pots and pans. None of these sacrifices were roasted, as God had commanded for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs (Ex. 12:9).

The correct translation reads: "And they boiled the Passover *offerings* over fire according to the law. And the holy *offerings* they boiled in pots, and in kettles, and in pans, and divided *them* speedily among all the people" (II Chron. 35:13).

This description of the sacrifices at Josiah's Passover does not include the roasting of the Passover lambs, as falsely indicated by the mistranslation of *bashal* in Verse 13. Those who misinterpret this account as applying exclusively to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs are completely ignoring the references to offerings from both the flock and the herd. As the account shows, the number of animals was so great that the sacrificing was not completed until the night of the 15th (verse 14). The details that are given in the account make it clear that this observance was not limited to the Passover day but extended into the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Josiah's Passover was no ordinary Passover. It was a call to national repentance! The Scriptural record of Josiah's Passover shows that this second temple-centered observance was even greater and more spectacular than Hezekiah's: "And the children of Israel who were present **kept the Passover at that time and the Feast of Unleavened *Bread* for seven days. And there was no Passover like that kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. Yea, none of the kings of Israel kept such a Passover as Josiah kept**, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the people of Jerusalem" (verses 17-18).

At the time of Josiah's Passover, the spiritual condition of the people of Judah was as degenerate as in the days of Hezekiah. The people had become so corrupted by paganism and so habituated to worshiping other gods, especially Baal and Asherah, that Josiah could not trust them to observe the Passover according to the commands of God in Exodus 12. Faced with these circumstances, Josiah chose the same solution that Hezekiah had chosen—a temple-centered Passover with the priests and Levites officiating in the sacrificing. The Scriptures clearly show that, in both cases, these Passovers were **"according to the command of the king," and NOT ACCORDING TO THE COMMAND OF GOD**.

In writing the book of II Chronicles, Ezra has given us a detailed account of the temple-centered Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah. As previously stated, in the parallel account of Hezekiah's life in II Kings 18-20, there is no record of his epochal Passover. Were it not for Ezra's writings, probably taken from other histories of the kings, we would not have known about Hezekiah's Passover. Because Ezra preserved the record, we know that it was a temple-centered Passover and that it was observed by the commandment of the king. Similarly, Ezra has preserved for us the complete story of Josiah's Passover. The account of Josiah's temple-centered Passover as recorded by Ezra in II Chronicles 35 is only briefly mentioned in the book of II Kings:

"And the king commanded all the people saying, 'Prepare the Passover to the LORD your God as *it is* written in the book of the covenant.' Surely there was not held such a Passover from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was held to the LORD in Jerusalem" (II Kings 23:21-23).

Although Hezekiah and Josiah had the most urgent and compelling reasons to centralize the Passover at the temple in Jerusalem, it is important to remember that these temple observances did not conform to the commands of God in Exodus 12. These Passovers were observed at the temple "**according to the commandment of the king**." The fact that God accepted these Passovers does not mean, by any stretch of the imagination, that He rescinded His ordinances for the Passover, which required the killing of the lambs by the head of each household "between the two evenings," or *ben ha arbayim*. **God's command for a domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs at the beginning of the 14th was not nullified by**

the command of the king! Although the temple-centered observance of the Passover was a vast improvement over the pagan worship of Baal and Asherah, and was instrumental in turning the people back to the worship of God, these temple-centered observances fell short of the ordinances that God had commanded.

Were it not for Ezra's detailed accounts in the book of II Chronicles, we would not know the actual historical events that led to the centralizing of the Passover at the temple. But the evidence is there for all to see. Preserved in the pages of the Holy Scriptures is the record that this change in the observance of the Passover was **NOT INSTITUTED BY GOD but by the kings of Judah**.

Failing to understand the historical circumstances that led to the temple sacrifice of the Passover, Judaism today claims that this tradition was instituted by God Himself. However, the Scriptures expose this claim as absolutely false. The accounts in II Chronicles 30 and 35 clearly show that the decision to centralize the Passover at the temple was made by **the kings of Judah and was NOT A COMMANDMENT OF GOD**. These temple observances represented a dramatic change from the commands that God had delivered to Moses, as recorded in the Book of the Law. The kings of Judah apparently chose to make this change because of the idolatrous history of the people and their pattern of rebellion against God. Left to themselves, the people could not be trusted to follow God with willing hearts. They needed the strong hand of the king to enforce obedience. As God had said, "They were provoking Me from the day they left Egypt." Moses testified of the continual rebellion of the people in the years that followed the Exodus: "And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, 'Go up and possess the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him, nor hearkened to His voice. **You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you**" (Deut. 9:23-24).

It was the people's long history of idolatry and rebellion against God that led to the changes in the Old Testament Passover ceremony during the days of Hezekiah and Josiah. These two kings of Judah made a temple-centered Passover mandatory because the people had forsaken God and gone whoring after other gods. Because they could not be trusted to sacrifice the Passover at their own houses, they were commanded to come to the temple, where the ceremony was supervised by the priests and Levites. Although these centralized observances were contrary to God's ordinances for the Passover, He acknowledged these temple-centered Passovers because the people were repenting and worshiping Him instead of the pagan gods of the nations around them. His acceptance of these Passovers does not mean that the temple observance of the Passover had replaced the ordinances that are recorded in Exodus 12.

The temple-centered Passovers that were commanded by Hezekiah and Josiah did not abolish the command of God for a domestic observance of the Passover at the beginning of the 14th day. This ordinance of God was

still in effect. However, from this point in Jewish history, two Passover observances began to be practiced side by side: 1) the **domestic Passover** on the 14th, according to the commands of God, and 2) the **temple-centered Passover** on the 14th/15th, according to the commands of the kings of Judah. This dual practice continued until the second destruction of the temple in AD 70. The Jews eventually forsook the 14th Passover observance altogether, and have for centuries observed only a 15th Passover.

Now that we understand the historical reasons for the changing of the Passover, and how the tradition of a 15th Passover originated, we must choose whether to base our beliefs on the practices of men or on the ordinances of God. If we are truly converted Christians, we will obey the commands of God the Father and Jesus Christ by observing the Passover with the new symbols at the time that God has commanded in His Word. We will not follow the traditions of the Jews, regardless of the authority that may be ascribed to them.

In Chapter Fourteen, we will thoroughly examine the commands of God in Deuteronomy 16. Although on the surface these commands appear to be instructions for a temple sacrifice of the Passover, we will see that in reality they are commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and particularly for the night of the 15th, which is called "the night to be much observed."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHAT IS THE TRUE MEANING OF DEUTERONOMY 16?

The advocates of a 15th Passover claim that the commands of God in Deuteronomy 16 support the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. On the surface, it appears that these commands required the sacrificing of the Passover at the temple, and that the Passover and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were combined into one feast. This interpretation of Deuteronomy 16 is taught by Jewish and Christian scholars alike. As the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states, "The section in Deut. 16:1-10 was interpreted as an attempt to abolish the private Passover celebrations..." (p. 668).

Is this interpretation of Deuteronomy 16 correct? Did God abolish the domestic Passover by commanding that the Passover sacrifice be offered at the temple? If that is the meaning of God's commands in Deuteronomy 16, then these commands are clearly contradicting His commands in Exodus 12, Numbers 9 and Leviticus 23 concerning the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Why do the commands in Deuteronomy 16 appear to be in conflict with all other commands of God for keeping the Passover? That is the question we will address in this chapter.

As we seek the answer to this question, we will apply the rules of Bible study that are listed in Chapter One of this book. We will come to understand the true meaning of Deuteronomy 16 by letting the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. We will approach our study and analysis very methodically, comparing Scripture with Scripture. As we complete our study of Deuteronomy 16, we will find that the commands in this chapter are for sacrifices that were offered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread—not for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

Please note: Since this study requires a technical analysis, more than one reading may be required to completely understand the material that is presented, especially if the reader is not familiar with the Old Testament passages that are explained in this chapter.

Comparison of the Commands in Exodus and Numbers with Those in Deuteronomy 16

Parallel columns showing the related commands in the books of Exodus and Numbers have been provided to assist the reader in comparing these Scriptures with the commands in Deuteronomy 16. The related passages contain commands that clearly refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Let us begin our study by examining the commands in Deuteronomy 16:1:

COMPARISON OF THE PASSOVER COMMANDS IN EXODUS 12, NUMBERS 9 AND 28 AND DEUTERONOMY 16

Exodus 12

3. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them each man a **lamb** for a father's **house**, a **lamb** for a **house**.
4. And if the **household** is too little for the lamb, let him and his **neighbor** next to his house take according to the number of the souls, each one, according to the eating of his mouth, you shall count concerning the **lamb**.
5. Your **lamb** shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You shall take *it* from the **sheep** or from the **goats**.
6. And you shall keep it up until the *beginning* of the **fourteenth day of the same month**. And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel **shall kill it between the two evenings**.
7. And they shall take of the blood and strike *it* on the two side posts and upon the upper door post of the **houses** *in* which they shall eat it.
8. And they shall eat the flesh **in that night, roasted with fire**, and unleavened *bread*. They shall eat it with *bitter* herbs.
9. **Do not eat of it raw, nor boiled** at **all with water, but roasted *with* fire**, its head with its legs, and with its inward parts.
10. And you shall not let any of it remain until the morning. And that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire.
11. And this is the way you shall eat it: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in trepidation. It *is* the LORD'S Passover,
12. For I will pass through the land of Egypt **this night**, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I *am* the LORD.
13. And the blood shall be a sign to you upon the **houses** where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you* when I smite the land of Egypt.
14. And this day shall be a memorial to you. And you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast as a law forever.

Exodus 12

24. And you shall observe this thing as a law to you and to your children forever.
25. And it shall be when you have come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He has promised that you shall keep this service.
26. And it will be, when your children shall say to you, 'What *does* this service *mean* to you?'
27. Then you shall say, '**It *is* the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses**.' " And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.
28. And the children of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did.
29. And it came to pass at midnight the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the prison, also all the firstborn of livestock.

Numbers 9

1. And the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, **in the first month of the second year** after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,
2. "Let the children of Israel also **keep the Passover** at its appointed time.
3. In **the fourteenth day of this month, between the two evenings**, you shall keep it in its appointed time. You shall keep it **according to all its statutes, and according to all the ceremonies of it**."
4. And Moses spoke to the children of Israel to **keep the Passover**.
5. And **they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month between the two evenings in the wilderness of Sinai. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, the children of Israel did**.

Numbers 9

9. And the LORD spoke to Moses saying,
10. "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If any man of you or of your generations shall be unclean because of a dead body, or in a journey afar off, he shall still keep the Passover to the LORD.
11. They shall keep it the **fourteenth day** of the second month **between the two evenings**, eating it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*.
12. They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any bone of it. **According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it**.
13. But the man that *is* clean, and is not in a journey, and holds back from keeping the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he did not bring the offering of the LORD at its appointed time, that man shall bear his sin.
14. And if a stranger shall live among you, and will **keep the Passover to the LORD, he shall do according to the law of the Passover, and according to its ordinance**. You shall have *only* one law, both for the stranger and for him that was born in the land.' "

COMPARISON OF THE PASSOVER COMMANDS IN EXODUS 12, NUMBERS 9 AND 28 AND DEUTERONOMY 16

Numbers 28

16. And **in the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the Passover of the LORD**.
17. And in the fifteenth day of this month *is* the feast. Seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten.
18. In the first day *shall be* a holy convocation. You shall do no kind of servile work.
19. But you shall offer an offering made by fire *for* a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year. They shall be to you without blemish.
20. And their grain offering *shall be* of flour mixed with oil: three tenth parts you shall prepare for a bull, and two tenth parts for a ram.
21. You shall prepare one tenth part for the one lamb, and for the seven lambs;
22. And one goat, a sin offering to make an atonement for you.
23. You shall prepare these besides the burnt offering at sunrise, which *is* for a continual burnt offering.
24. In this way you shall offer daily, seven days, the bread of the sacrifice made by fire for a sweet savor to the LORD. It shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.
25. And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no servile work.

Deuteronomy 16

1. "Keep **the month of Abib**, and observe the Passover to the LORD your God. For **in the month of Abib, the LORD your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night.**
2. And you shall therefore sacrifice the **Passover offering to the LORD your God, of the flock and the herd**, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place His name there.
3. You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, the bread of affliction, for you **came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, so that you may remember the day that you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life**.
4. And there shall be no leaven seen with you in all your borders for seven days. Nor shall *any* of the flesh which you sacrificed in the **first day at sunset** remain all night until the morning.
5. You may not sacrifice the Passover offering within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you,
6. But at the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place His name in, there you shall **sacrifice the Passover offering at sunset, at the going *down* of the sun, at the time that you came out of Egypt**.
7. And you shall **boil** and eat *it* in the place which the LORD your God shall choose. And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents.
8. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread. And on the seventh day *shall be* a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work.

Deuteronomy 16
Shocken Bible

1. Keep the **New-Moon [month] of Aviv/** Ripe-Grain. You are to observe Passover to YHWH your God, for **in the New-Moon [month] of Aviv YHWH your God took you out of Egypt, at night**.
2. You are to slaughter the **Passover-offering to YHWH your God, (from) flock and HERD**, in the place that YHWH chooses to have his name dwell.
3. You are not to eat it with leaven, seven days you are to eat it with *matzot,* bread of affliction, for with trepidation **you went out from the land of Egypt, in order that you may bear-in-mind the day of your going-out from the land of Egypt all the days of your life**.
4. There is not to be seen with you (any) fermentation in all your territory for seven days, **there is not to remain-overnight (any) of the meat that you slaughter at sunset [*ba erev*] on the first day**, till day break [*boqer*].
5. You may not slaughter the Passover-offering within one of your gates that YHWH your God is giving you;
6. rather, in the place. that YHWH your God chooses his name to dwell **you are to slaughter the Passover-offering, at setting time, when the sun comes in, at the appointed-time of your going-out from Egypt**.
7. You are to **boil it** and you are to eat it in the place that YHWH your god chooses. Then you are to face about, at daybreak and go back to your tents.
8. For six days you are to eat *matzot*, on the seventh day is a (day of) Restraint to YHWH your God; you are not to do (any) work.

COMPARISON OF THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD COMMANDS IN EXODUS 12, 13, 23, 34 AND DEUTERONOMY 16

Exodus 12

15. **You shall eat unleavened *bread* seven days**; even **the first day** you shall *have* put away leaven out of your houses; for whoever eats leavened bread from **the first day until the seventh day**, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.
16. And in **the first day** *there shall be* a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done in them, except that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you.
17. And **you shall keep the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread, for in this very same day I have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt**. Therefore you shall keep **this day** in your generations as a law forever.
18. **In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at sunset**, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at sunset.
19. Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses, for whoever eats that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.
20. You shall eat nothing leavened. In all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.' "

Exodus 12

51. And it came to pass **the very same day, *when* the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt** by their armies,

Exodus 13

1. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
2. "Sanctify all the firstborn to Me, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, of man and of beast. It *is* Mine."
3. And Moses said to the people, "**Remember this day *in* which you came out of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage; for the LORD **brought you out** from this place by the strength of His hand. There shall be no leavened bread eaten.
4. On **this day you are going out, in the month Abib**.
5. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.
6. **You shall eat unleavened bread seven days**, and in the seventh day there *shall be* a feast to the LORD.
7. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with you, nor shall there be leaven seen with you in all your borders.
8. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, '**This is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out from Egypt**.'
9. And it shall be a sign to you upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth, **for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt**.
10. You shall therefore keep this law in its season from year to year.

Exodus 23

14. You shall keep a feast unto Me **three times in the year**.
15. You shall keep **the Feast of Unleavened Bread.** You shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in **the month *of* Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt**. And no one shall appear before Me empty.
16. Also **the Feast of the Harvest of the Firstfruits** of your labors, which you have sown in the field. And the **Feast of Ingathering**, in the end of the year, when you have gathered in your labors out of the field.
17. **Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD**.

COMPARISON OF THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD COMMANDS IN EXODUS 12, 13, 23, 34 AND DEUTERONOMY 16

Exodus 34

18. You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened *Bread*. You shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, in the time **of the month Abib**, **for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt**.
19. All that opens the womb *is* Mine; all firstlings of male livestock, of oxen or sheep.
20. But the firstling of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before Me empty.
21. You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.
22. And you shall observe **the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits** of wheat harvest, and **the Feast of Ingathering** at the year's end.
23. **Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel**,

Deuteronomy 16

1. "Keep the month of Abib, and observe the Passover to the LORD your God. For **in the month of Abib, the LORD your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night.**
2. And you shall therefore sacrifice the Passover offering to the LORD your God, of the **flock and the herd**, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place His name there.
3. You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, the bread of affliction, for you **came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, so that you may remember the day that you came forth out of the land of Egypt** all the days of your life.
4. And there shall be no leaven seen with you in all your borders for seven days. Nor shall *any* of the flesh which you sacrificed in **the first day at sunset** remain all night until the morning.
5. You may not sacrifice the Passover offering within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you,
6. But at the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place His name in, there you shall **sacrifice the Passover offering at sunset, at the going *down* of the sun, at the time that you came out of Egypt**.
7. And you shall **boil** and eat *it* in the place which the LORD your God shall choose. And in the morning you **shall turn and go to your tents**.
8. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread. And on the seventh day *shall be* a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work.
9. You shall count seven weeks to yourselves. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time you *first* began *to put* the sickle to the grain.

Deuteronomy 16

10. And you shall keep **the Feast of Weeks** to the LORD your God according to the sufficiency of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give according as the LORD your God has blessed you.
11. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your male servant, and your female servant, and the Levite inside your gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, those among you, in the place which the LORD your God has chosen to place His name there.
12. And **you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt**. And you shall be careful to do these statutes.
13. You shall keep **the Feast of Tabernacles seven days**, after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine press.
14. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your male servants, and your female servants, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow within your gates.
15. Seven days you shall keep a solemn feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose. Because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all the works of your hands, therefore you shall surely rejoice.
16. **Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the LORD** your God in the place which He shall choose: in **the Feast of Unleavened Bread**, and in **the Feast of Weeks**, and in **the Feast of Tabernacles**. **And they shall not appear before the LORD empty**,
17. Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God, which He has given you.

"Keep **the month of Abib**, and observe **the Passover** to the LORD your God. For in **the month of Abib,** the LORD your God **brought you forth out of Egypt by night**"

The command to "keep the **Passover**" has led many to assume that this verse is referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs. Let us test this interpretation by applying the rules of Bible study and examining the context of this command.

When we analyze the entire verse, it is clear that the command to "keep the Passover is linked with "**the month Abib**" and going "**forth out of Egypt by night**." But remember what we have learned about the meaning of the Passover. What did God say the Passover commemorates? As the Scriptures clearly show, the Passover does not commemorate leaving Egypt. It commemorates the Lord's passing over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt! On the other hand, what does the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** commemorate, especially the first day? It commemorates the Exodus—**the day that God brought them forth out of Egypt!**

The children of Israel **did NOT leave Egypt on the Passover night! They stayed in their houses until the next morning, as God had commanded**. The leaving, or being brought forth out of Egypt, was the beginning of the Exodus itself, which occurred the following night, **the night after the Passover night**. We have proved this fact beyond any shadow of doubt!

When we examine the related commands in the books of Exodus and Numbers, we find that Deuteronomy 16:1 is the **only** Scripture which uses the term "Passover" in conjunction with "the month of Abib" and being brought forth out of Egypt. Every other Scriptural command to observe "the month of Abib" is clearly and unmistakably referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As the parallel columns show, the related passages in Exodus 13, 23, and 34 all refer to "the month Abib" and the Exodus from Egypt. But in each case, it is a command to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, **not the Passover**.

Why does Deuteronomy 16:1 use the term "Passover" in the context of commemorating the Exodus? What is the reason for this apparent discrepancy between Deuteronomy 16:1 and other Scriptural references to leaving Egypt in the month Abib? In order to answer these questions, we need to examine the Scriptural instructions that are recorded in the following verses in Deuteronomy 16, and the related instructions in the book of Exodus.

When we compare the instructions in Exodus 23:14-17 and 34:18-24 with the instructions in Deuteronomy 16:1-17, we find that these three passages have the same theme. They all pertain to the three major feasts of God:

A. Feast of Unleavened Bread
B. Feast of Firstfruits or Weeks, now called Pentecost
C. Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering

These sections of Scripture give specific instructions for observing these three major feasts. The commands that are given for these three festivals do not necessarily apply to the Passover, which is also a feast but not a holy day. The focus in such passages is on the annual holy days that were observed at the tabernacle/temple.

When we understand the context of the commands in Deuteronomy 16, it appears that the word Passover is entirely out of place. The commands in this chapter do not relate to the Passover sacrifice but to the observance of the annual holy days, at which time the heads of households were commanded to assemble before God. In Deuteronomy 16:16 we read, "Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the LORD your God in the place which He shall choose: **in the Feast of Unleavened Bread**, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles...."

As this verse shows, the underlying theme of Deuteronomy 16 is the annual feast days which were **commanded assemblies** for the children of Israel. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is included among these annual holy convocations, but **not the Passover**. Deuteronomy 16:16 does not command any assembling for the Passover, as it does for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Although the Passover was instituted by God as a memorial and commanded feast, the Passover day itself was never designated as a commanded assembly.

When we let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures, it is clear that the commands in Deuteronomy 16, which on the surface appear to be instructions for the Passover, are in reality instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These commands do not apply to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb on the Passover day. Rather, they are specific instructions for "the night to be much remembered," which begins the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the 15th day of the first month. As the Scriptural account shows, "the night to be much observed" was the night after the Passover—not the same night.

Although Deuteronomy 16 contains instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the two other holy days seasons, the fact that the word "Passover" appears in Verse 1 has caused great confusion in the minds of many Bible students and scholars. They are not aware that these verses were edited by Ezra long after the book of Deuteronomy was originally written, and that in Ezra's time the entire eight-day observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was called "Passover." When we understand that the term "Passover" was used for the Feast of Unleavened bread, the seeming discrepancy between Deuteronomy 16 and other Scriptural passages is eliminated. The Word of God stands sure.

Twelve Major Differences in the Commands in Deuteronomy 16

The commands that are given in Deuteronomy 16 differ greatly from the Passover instructions that are recorded in Exodus 12 and in Numbers 9 and 28. When we analyze the commands in Deuteronomy 16, we find twelve

major discrepancies between these commands and the ordinances that God gave for the Passover. These differences all point to the fact that the word "Passover" in Deuteronomy 16 is not referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs but to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Let's take a close look at these differences to verify which feast is being named in Deuteronomy 16:

1) The word "Passover" is linked with the month of Abib only in Deuteronomy 16:1, which was edited by Ezra at a time when the Feast of Unleavened Bread was called Passover. In all other Scriptures, the phrase "the month of Abib" is clearly referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

2) Deuteronomy 16:1 appears to link the Passover with leaving Egypt, but Exodus 12 specifically states that the Passover commemorates God's PASSING OVER the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He executed judgment upon the firstborn of the Egyptians. **The Passover does not commemorate the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, but the Lord's passing over** the children of Israel the night before they left Egypt. On the Passover night, at midnight, the Lord passed through the land of Egypt, killing the Egyptian firstborn, man and beast, but sparing the first-born of the Israelites, man and beast. The houses of the children of Israel were passed over because the blood of the Passover lambs was sprinkled on the side posts and lintels of the doors. As the Scriptures clearly show, the children of Israel stayed in their houses until morning. They did not leave their houses during the night of the Passover. It is an undeniable Scriptural fact that the Exodus did not occur on the Passover night!

3) Deuteronomy 16:6 gives the time setting for the "Passover offering" as "at even [Hebrew *ba erev*], at the going down of the sun." This command differs from the commands in Exodus 12 and Numbers 9 that the Passover lamb be killed at *ben ha arbayim*— "between the two evenings," or between sunset and dark. The account in Exodus 16 of the miracle of the quail, which we studied in Chapter Five, PROVES ABSOLUTELY, WITH NO ROOM FOR DOUBT, that *ben ha arbayim* begins IMMEDIATELY AFTER sunset; *ben ha arbayim* DOES NOT OCCUR BEFORE SUNSET, NOR DURING THE SETTING OF THE SUN. The command to sacrifice "at the going down of the sun" does not apply to the killing of the Passover lambs, which were slain at the beginning of *ben ha arbayim*, after the sun had gone down. Therefore, the "passover-offering" that is referred to in Deuteronomy 16:6 cannot be the sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

4) The phrase "brought thee forth out of Egypt by night" in Deuteronomy 16:1 directly conflicts with the Passover command in Exodus 12:22 that "none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning." However, the phrase "brought thee forth out of Egypt by night" does not conflict with leaving the next night, as recorded in Exodus 12:37-42 and Numbers 33:3-5. When we understand that the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates the Exodus, then the phrases "**at the going down of the sun**" and "**brought you forth out of Egypt by night**" fit perfectly. As we learned in Chapter Eight of this book, the children of Israel gathered at Rameses during the day portion of the 14th, after eating the Passover on the night of the 14th. They began to leave Egypt "**at the going down of the sun**," or *ba erev*,

which ended the 14th and began the 15th. As the Scriptural account shows, the Exodus from Egypt continued on into the night of the 15th.

The Scriptures show very plainly that the children of Israel **were brought forth by night**, but NOT the same night that they kept the Passover. Numbers 33 records, "And they set out from Rameses in the first month, **on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the *next* day after the Passover *day*,** the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians, **while the Egyptians were still burying all *their* firstborn whom the LORD had stricken among them**" (Num. 33:3-4, *JPSA*). *For a technical exegesis of Numbers 33:3, see Appendix M.*

Some scholars apparently believe that the Egyptians were burying their dead in the dark hours shortly after midnight, because they claim that the Exodus took place shortly after midnight on the Passover night—only an hour or two after the destroyer had passed—which would truly have been "in the dead of the night!" But these verses in Numbers 33 show that after gathering at Rameses in the daylight hours following the Passover, the children of Israel began leaving Rameses "at the going down of the sun," or *ba erev* of the 14th, which was the beginning of the 15th. They departed from Rameses as the night of the 15th was beginning. When their march began, the Egyptians were still burying their firstborn, who were slain in the middle of the previous night.

5) The "Passover offering" that is commanded in Deuteronomy 16:2 could be **taken from the herd** as well as the flock. The Hebrew word that is translated "herd" is *baqar*, which specifically refers to bovine animals such as calves and bullocks. But no calf or other bovine was allowed to be used for the Passover sacrifice. Exodus 12:3-5 clearly records that the children of Israel were to select a lamb or a goat kid, a male less than a year old. The animal for the Passover sacrifice was to be taken **from the flock only, NOT from the herd**. THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS A PASSOVER CALF! Jesus, Who fulfilled the Passover by sacrificing His own body, was not called the calf of God, but "THE LAMB OF GOD, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Unlike the Passover sacrifice, which was selected only from the sheep or goats, the sacrifices that were offered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread specifically included **bovine animals**. The commands for these sacrifices are found in Numbers 28:17-24. During the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, these sacrifices were offered from both the flock and the herd, or *baqar*. Offerings from the herd, or *baqar*, were the most expensive offering that could be offered. They, like the lambs and kids from the flocks, were offered as burnt offerings, peace offerings and thank offerings.

The account of Josiah's Passover in II Chronicles 35 shows that these offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread were called "Passover offerings." In II Chronicles 35:7-9, the term "Passover offerings" is not referring to the Passover sacrifice, but to the lambs and bullocks which were offered as additional sacrifices on each of the seven days of the Feast of

Unleavened Bread. These "Passover offerings" are clearly distinguished from the Passover sacrifice itself by the details that are recorded in II Chronicles 35.

Ezra's use of the term "Passover offering" in II Chronicles 35 gives us a firm Scriptural foundation for understanding the meaning of Deuteronomy 16. When we let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures, it is clear that the term "Passover offering" in Deuteronomy 16:2 is not referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs, but to the sacrifices for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which were taken from both the flock and the herd.

6) Deuteronomy 16:5-6 gives these instructions concerning the "Passover offering": "You may not sacrifice the **Passover offering** within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, but **at the place which the LORD your God shall choose** to place His name in, there you shall sacrifice the Passover offering at sunset [*ba erev*], at the going *down* of the sun, at the time that you came out of Egypt."

This command directly contradicts the Passover commands that are recorded in Exodus 12, which show that the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was a domestic observance. In Numbers 9 we read that these Passover commands were established as lasting ordinances and statutes for the children of Israel. Our study of the Old Testament records has demonstrated that God did not change the time or the place of the Passover sacrifice. It was not God but the kings of Judah who instituted the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. Moreover, Numbers 28:16 shows that before the temple was built, there was no Passover sacrifice at the tabernacle on the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month. However, there were sacrifices at the tabernacle every day during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (See Num. 28:17-24.) Unlike the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, these offerings were NEVER A DOMESTIC OBSERVANCE. The children of Israel were forbidden to offer them within their gates. This command adds to the Scriptural evidence that the term "Passover offering" in Deuteronomy 16 refers to the sacrifices for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which were offered by the priests at the tabernacle.

7) Deuteronomy 16:3 commands, "...Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it...." When we read the preceding verse, we find that the antecedent of "with it" is "**the Passover offering**." The command in Verse 3 shows that unleavened bread was eaten with the "**Passover offering**" for SEVEN DAYS! Since the Passover lambs were eaten on only one day, the 14th day of the first month, it would be IMPOSSIBLE to eat unleavened bread with it for seven days. The fact that the "Passover offering" in Deuteronomy 16 continued for seven full days, makes it unmistakably clear that this term refers to the sacrifices that were offered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

8) In the *King James Version* in Deuteronomy 16:7 we read, "And thou shalt roast and eat it...." This command has been interpreted as referring to the Passover lamb because it matches God's command for observing the Passover (Exodus 12:8-9). However, the word "roast" **is not a correct translation** of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew word that is translated "roast" is *bashal*, which

means "boil." *Bashal* is generally translated "seethe" in the *KJV*. It is translated "boil" in Leviticus 8:31, and "sod" or "sodden" in the following verses in the Pentateuch: Exodus 12:9, Leviticus 6:21 and Numbers 6:19. It is translated "seethe" in the following verses: Exodus 16:23; 29:31 and 34:26, and Deuteronomy 14:21. In Numbers 11:8 it is translated both "seethe" and "baked with oil," which probably means boiled in oil or deep fried.

It is wholly incorrect to translate the Hebrew word *bashal* as "roast," as the translators of the *JPSA* and *KJV* have done in Deuteronomy 16:7. This verse should read "And you shall boil and eat *it*...." *The Revised Standard Version*, *New English Version, and Berkeley Translation* all correctly translate *bashal* as "boil" in Deuteronomy 16:7.

Some Jewish authorities acknowledge that the word "roast" in Deuteronomy 16:7 is a mistranslation. In his Hebrew interlinear, Magil footnotes the correct translation of *bashal* as "boil." *Bashal* is also translated correctly in *The Schocken Bible*, which states, "You are **to boil it** and you are to eat it..." (Deut. 16:7). On the other hand, in what is considered the most authoritative Hebrew version and Jewish commentary, *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary*, with the linear translation by Rabbis Abraham Ben Isaiah and Benjamin Sharfman, *bashal* is translated "roast." However, a commentary notation states that *bashal* "usually denotes 'cooking.' " This commentary note cleverly masks the mistranslation of *bashal* as "roast."

Whether the mistranslation of Deuteronomy 16:7 was done deliberately or by oversight gives the appearance that this passage applies to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs. When correctly translated, it is obvious that the command in Deuteronomy 16:7 is not referring to the sacrifice of the Passover. The sacrifice referred to in this verse was to be **boiled**, as the use of *bashal* clearly shows. To interpret Deuteronomy 16:7 as a command for the Passover is in direct conflict with God's command that the Passover lambs be roasted. The Hebrew word for "roast" is *tsacah*. *Tsacah* is used in Exodus 12 in the commands for observing the Passover: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, **roasted** [*tsacah*] **with fire**....**Do not eat of it raw, nor boiled** [*bashal*] **at all with water, but roasted** [*tsacah*] ***with* fire**" (verses 8-9). God clearly commanded that the Passover lambs be ROASTED (*TSACAH*) WITH FIRE. IT WAS FORBIDDEN TO BOIL (*BASHAL*) THEM! The lambs were not to be boiled in water or cooked in a covered pot, where the juices could boil the meat.

This fact is quite clear: Since *bashal*, the Hebrew word for "boil," is used in Deuteronomy 16:7, this command CANNOT be referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. The commands in Exodus 12:8-9 are most EMPHATIC that the Passover lamb was to be **roasted (*tsacah*) with fire**. It would be foolish indeed to claim that God contradicted Himself and commanded that the Passover lambs be boiled, or *bashal*, as the Hebrew specifically states in Deuteronomy 16:7.

The commands that we find in Deuteronomy 16—to boil the sacrifices, to sacrifice animals from the herd as well as lambs and kid goats, to eat unleavened bread with those sacrifices for seven days, to assemble at the

temple, to celebrate the Exodus—are all COMMANDS FOR THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, NOT FOR THE PASSOVER.

9) The term "the first day" in Deuteronomy 16:4 does NOT refer to the Passover day. This term clearly refers to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as it follows the command to observe seven days: "...there shall be no leaven seen with thee...**seven days**; neither shall any of the flesh, which thou sacrificest the first day...." The use of the word "passover" in Verse 1 is a later terminology of Judaism. The practice of calling the Feast of Unleavened Bread "the Passover" began many centuries after God gave His commands for the Passover.

10) Deuteronomy 16:4 commands, "...Neither shall any of the flesh, which thou sacrificest the first day at even, remain all night until the morning" (JPSA). Many have assumed that this command is referring to the flesh of the Passover lamb, as God gave a similar command for the Passover: "And you shall not let any of it remain until the morning. And **that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire**" (Ex. 12:10).

Not knowing that God gave these same instructions for other sacrifices, many have assumed that Deuteronomy 16:4 must be referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. But the command in Deuteronomy 16:4 was also a requirement for peace offerings: "And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered. **He shall not leave any of it until the morning**" (Lev. 7:15). The same command was given for thank offerings: "And when you will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, offer *it* at your own will. **On the same day it is to be eaten. You shall leave none of it until morning.** I *am* the LORD. And you shall keep My commandments, and do them. I *am* the LORD" (Lev. 22:29-31).

Peace offerings and thank offerings were the principal sacrifices that were offered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread and other annual feast days. None of the flesh of these sacrifices was to be left until morning. However, there is a difference between God's commands for these offerings and His command for the Passover sacrifice. Although the commands are similar, the command for the sacrifice of the Passover lamb includes an additional requirement: "...**that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire**" (Ex. 12:10).

The commands for peace offerings and thank offerings do not include a requirement to burn the remains, as does the command for the Passover sacrifice. Neither does the command in Deuteronomy 16. Because there is no requirement to burn the remains of the offerings in Deuteronomy 16:4, we can conclude that this verse is not referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

The instructions in Deuteronomy 16:4, which many have interpreted as commands for the Passover lamb, are clearly referring to the thank offerings and peace offerings that were made during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These sacrifices began on the "first day at sunset"—

the evening beginning the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th day of the first month, which commemorates the Exodus of the children of Israel. The Exodus actually started at sunset beginning on the 15th, the next night after the Passover night. It was a special "night to be observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt to be observed of all the children of Israel throughout their generations" (Ex. 12:42).

The Lord "passed over" the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, sparing the firstborn of man and beast at midnight on the Passover night. However, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the actual day of redemption of the firstborn, as the Lord began to bring them out of Egypt. Therefore, on this day, the Lord commanded the children of Israel concerning the redemption of the firstborn: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: **It is Mine** ... thou shalt set apart all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of beast which thou hast: the males *shall be* the Lord's and every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck: **and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem**" (Ex. 13:1, 12-13, *KJV*). The clean animals were to be redeemed on the eighth day (Ex. 22:30). Likewise with the unclean were to be redeemed with a lamb on the eighth day.

Consequently, at the tabernacle/temple beginning in the late afternoon on the Passover day, in preparation for the night to be much observed, there were undoubtedly a great number of sacrifices, from the flock and the herd, to be offered for the redemption of the firstborn of man and beast. These redemption sacrifices would also be called "Passover offerings." However, they were not used for the "Passover-sacrifice" itself, but in the celebration of "the night to be much observed unto the Lord." Undoubtedly, these were also part of the sacrifices of the flock and herd commanded in Deuteronomy 16.

Evidence of the special observance of that night is found in Deuteronomy 16:7: "...And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents" This verse shows that the commemoration of the Exodus lasted through the entire night. When they began the Exodus from Egypt, the children of Israel apparently marched all that night. This is the night that is described in Deuteronomy 16:1 as the time that God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. That night was the beginning of the 15th day of the first month, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The commands in Verses 4 and 7 of Deuteronomy 16 are further proof that this chapter contains instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread—not for the Passover day.

11) Deuteronomy 16:2, 5 and 6 are the only verses in the entire Pentateuch where the offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread are referred to as "the Passover offering." This terminology was not in use when Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, but reflects the later practice of the Jews.

12) Deuteronomy 16:8 contains what appears to be a glaring contradiction to other Scriptural commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "**SIX DAYS you shall eat unleavened bread**..."

This statement has been used to support the rabbinical teaching that it was not obligatory to eat unleavened bread on the seventh day. But when we examine the context, we find that this rabbinical interpretation of Deuteronomy 16:8 directly conflicts with God's commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Verse 3 and Verse 4 state that no leaven was to be eaten for seven days. Verse 8 does not contradict these commands. Rather, it shows that after eating unleavened bread for six days, "the seventh day" was to be observed as a "solemn assembly." These commands, and the preceding commands in Verses 3 and 4, show that the seventh day was in every respect a day of unleavened bread. When we let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures, there is no conflict between Deuteronomy 16:8 and the other commands for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Some believe that Deuteronomy 16:8 was edited after the time of Ezra to support the rabbinical practice of observing only six days of unleavened bread. Whether or not the Hebrew text was altered, it has obviously been misrepresented. To claim that Deuteronomy 16:8 is a command to eat unleavened bread for ONLY six days is a blatant distortion of the Scriptures. The true interpretation of this verse is revealed in the context, which clearly commands that unleavened bread be eaten for **seven days**. Verse 8 does not alter this command. It simply points out that the seventh day of unleavened bread is also a Sabbath and a commanded assembly.

Remember, error does not agree with truth. Truth agrees with the Scriptures, and the Word of God does not contradict itself. It is possible that the Hebrew text was altered by men in an attempt to give their human interpretations the appearance of Scriptural authority. However, the Word of God so totally agrees with itself, because God inspired it, that these areas of human misrepresentation can be discovered and corrected.

Deuteronomy 16 Does Not Support a 15th Passover

Those who observe a Nisan 15 Passover maintain that the commands in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 support their belief and practice. In every book, booklet, study paper, or article which advocates a 15th Passover, Deuteronomy 16 is presented as THE MAJOR "PROOF TEXT." But while Deuteronomy 16:1-8, as translated in the JPSA and KJV, might appear to uphold a 15th Passover, we have clearly seen that it does not! The scriptural evidence shows that the instructions given in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 are commands for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, not for the Passover. The term "Passover offering" in Deuteronomy 16 was apparently edited into the text at a later time, when the Passover and the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread were referred to as "Passover." The combining of the two feasts under the name "Passover" appears to have come into practice after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity.

The prophet Ezekiel, who lived and wrote in the early days of Ezra and Nehemiah, confirms the use of this later terminology for the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover; a feast of seven days..." (Ezek. 45:21, *JPSA*).

The correct translation of this verse reads: "In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover; for the festival of seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten" (Ezek 45:21). The proper translation and punctuation of this verse shows that the Passover is observed as a single day, *followed by* the seven additional days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

This verse is another Scriptural example of the later terminology that was used at the time of Ezra. But the fact that the Scriptures use this terminology does not nullify or alter the Passover commands of God in Exodus 12, Numbers 9 and Leviticus 23. *For a technical exegesis of Ezekiel 45:21, see Appendix R.*

When correctly translated and interpreted in the light of all the Scriptures, the commands in Deuteronomy 16 do not support a 15th Passover at all. **THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT COMMAND A 15TH PASSOVER. SUCH A TEACHING IS A TRADITION OF THE JEWS!**

Jesus Christ condemned the leaders of Judaism for placing their traditions above the Word of God. He said, "Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men.' For leaving the commandments of God, you hold fast the traditions of men..." (Mark 7:6-8).

Today, we are facing the same conflict between the Word of God and the traditions of Judaism, and each of us must make a decision: Am I going to keep the commandments of God, or the traditions of men? This question is the heart and core of the 14th/15th Passover controversy.

In this chapter we have seen overwhelming evidence that the commands in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 are, in fact, instructions for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These instructions, which refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as "the Passover," were later applied to the Passover day in an attempt to support and uphold a 15th Passover. Aiding this false view of Deuteronomy 16 was the mistranslation of *bashal* as "roast" instead of "boil." This mistranslation has distorted the true meaning of these commands and helped to perpetuate the controversy over the correct day for the observance of the Passover. Such mistranslations, misrepresentations and misinterpretations are intended to justify the Jews' departure from the domestic observance of the Passover at the beginning of the 14th and their practice of sacrificing the Passover lamb late in the afternoon of the 14th and eating the Passover meal on the night of the 15th, which begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In Chapter Fifteen, we will study the historical circumstances that led to the editing of the Hebrew text, particularly as they relate to the 14th/15th Passover controversy.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHY WAS DEUTERONOMY 16 EDITED? WHO EDITED IT?

The book of Deuteronomy contains the only passage in the entire Pentateuch that refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as "passover." This later terminology was apparently edited into the text when Ezra was preparing the books of the Old Testament for canonization. The fact that Ezra used the same terminology when he wrote the book of II Chronicles shows that it was the customary practice of his day.

Why would Ezra use this terminology only in Deuteronomy 16 and not in any of the related passages in the Pentateuch? The answer is that the commands in Deuteronomy 16 are not the direct words of God, as are the commands in Exodus 12, Numbers 9 and 28, and Leviticus 23. The book of Deuteronomy, which means the "second giving of the Law," records the final words of Moses to the children of Israel. In this message, Moses reminds them of all the commands of God that they must observe when they enter the Promised Land. Since the commands in Deuteronomy 16 were not spoken directly by God but by Moses, it was considered permissible to edit them.

In this chapter, we will examine the historical circumstances that led to the modifications that Ezra made in Deuteronomy 16. These same circumstances led Ezra to institute a "new Passover law," which officially centralized the Passover at Jerusalem. As in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah, this action was an emergency measure in response to a national crisis. The true worship of God in Jerusalem was being threatened by a Samaritan conspiracy, and the Scriptures—particularly the books of the Law—were in danger of being corrupted.

To preserve the true worship of God, Ezra used his authority as priest and religious leader of the Jews to edit and canonize the Old Testament Scriptures. As part of his work in preserving the Book of the Law, known today as the Pentateuch, Ezra edited Deuteronomy 16 in order to make the text more understandable to the Jews of his day. Since they referred to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as "Passover," Ezra edited the commands in Deuteronomy 16 to fit this later terminology. The offerings for the seven days of unleavened bread are referred to as "passover-offerings" because the Feast of Unleavened Bread was called "Passover."

Misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 16

The proponents of a 15th Passover teach that the commands in Deuteronomy 16 refer to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. The first eight verses in Deuteronomy 16 are the key Scriptures that they use to support their claim that the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs was sanctioned by God. They find Deuteronomy 16 convenient to use because the terminology in this chapter appears to refer to the Passover. They either ignore or fail to

understand that the terms "Passover" and "Passover offering" refer to the observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They deny that verse 6 is referring to the offering that God commanded for the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commemorates the beginning of the Exodus on the night of the 15th. Instead, they claim that the offering that was commanded "at the going down of the sun" was the sacrifice of the Passover lambs. This misleading interpretation of Deuteronomy 16 makes it appear that the Passover lambs were slain at the end of the 14th and were eaten on the 15th.

The supporters of a 15th Passover have been able to promote their false teaching because few understand the true meaning of the terminology that is used in Deuteronomy 16. This general lack of understanding allows the commands in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 to be misapplied and misinterpreted. Another key factor makes it even easier to misinterpret the commands in this passage. Unlike the related passages concerning the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, DEUTERONOMY 16 DOES NOT GIVE ANY SPECIFIC DATES!

The fact that no specific days of the month are found in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 has made these Scriptures the chief text of those who promote a 15th Passover. Although this teaching clearly conflicts with the days that are recorded in Exodus 12, Numbers 9 and Leviticus 23, they have found a way to circumvent these Scriptural passages which specify the exact time for the killing of the Passover lambs. In order to avoid an obvious conflict with God's command, they claim that *ben ha arbayim* begins in the afternoon of the day and ends "at sunset," or *ba erev*.

The teaching that *ben ha arbayim* occurs in the afternoon of the day originated in Judaism. According to Jewish tradition, the Passover lambs were always slain on the afternoon of the 14th and were eaten after sunset, on the night of the 15th. As we learned in Chapter Five, there is a Scriptural witness in Exodus 16 that exposes the error in this traditional view. This Scriptural record clearly shows, leaving no room for doubt, that *ben ha arbayim*, or "between the two evenings," occurs immediately AFTER SUNSET, and is the period of time between sunset and the darkness of night.

The Scriptural observance of the Passover has always been at the beginning of the 14th day of the first month, between sunset and dark. However, the observance of the Passover by the Jews was shifted from the 14th to the 15th by misinterpreting *ben ha arbayim*, the time commanded by God for the killing of the lambs. This change from the ordinance of God was justified by applying the first eight verses in Deuteronomy 16 to the Passover, when in reality these verses refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was renamed "Passover." With this new interpretation, the Passover was combined with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the instructions in Deuteronomy 16 for the offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread were applied to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

The later terminology that is used in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 has been greatly misrepresented and misinterpreted. The internal evidence of the

Scriptures clearly shows that the commands in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 do not refer to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. These commands clearly contradict the Passover ordinances given by God at Israel's first Passover, as recorded in Exodus 12.

The misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 16 played a key role in establishing the temple-centered 14/15 Passover as an official tradition of Judaism. From ancient times, the leaders of Judaism have taught that the commands in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 support their tradition. They also point to the temple-centered Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah as historical precedents to justify their permanent departure from the Passover ordinances in Exodus 12.

Misrepresentation of the Temple Passovers

Contrary to Judaism's claims, the temple-centered Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah do not show that God changed the ordinances that He had established for the Passover. In Chapters Eleven and Twelve, we thoroughly studied the Passover observances in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. The Scriptural accounts make it quite clear that these temple-centered Passovers were observed according to the commands of King Hezekiah and King Josiah—**not by the command of God**. Apparently, these two kings of Judah commanded a temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs because they could not trust the people to keep a domestic Passover properly, after years of horrible idolatries and abominable Baal and Asherah worship. From the days of King Manasseh and his son Amon, the Jews had been sacrificing to pagan gods in groves on top of every green hill, and EVEN AT THE TEMPLE OF GOD! The land of Judah was filled with altars for sacrificing to pagan gods. King Josiah later destroyed all these idols and pagan places of worship. (See II Chronicles 33-35 for a detailed account.) After Josiah's reign, the curses of war, famine and captivity were executed against the Jews, as God had warned. The captives who were taken to Babylon were preserved and prospered. (See the books of Jeremiah and Daniel.)

At the end of the seventy-year Babylonian captivity, a few thousand Jews, including priests and Levites, returned to Jerusalem and laid the foundation of the second temple in the midst of great difficulties. When the temple was finished, they kept the Passover, as recorded in Ezra 6. As we will see, the circumstances that transpired in Ezra's time were nearly identical to those that occurred in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah. In fact, they may have been worse. After returning from the Babylonian captivity in 539 BC, the Jewish people—including many Levites and priests—were again unfaithful to God. Once again, firm leadership had to be exercised. And with the imposition of this leadership came the centralization of the Passover, which was enforced by Ezra under the authority of the king of Persia.

Ezra understood that strict control was necessary to save the Jewish people from decimation or from another harsh captivity. But this need for central authority does not change the fact that the Passover ordinances of God were still in force. No national government or human institution could change that fact. Not even the official sanction of the foremost religious leader could change the Passover ordinances of God.

While Ezra was responsible for centralizing the Passover, it is important to remember that his action was intended to protect the true worship of God. He was not acting in opposition to God's ordinances and therefore was NOT ACTING AGAINST THE AUTHORITY OF GOD. Although Ezra restricted the observance of the Passover to the vicinity of Jerusalem, it was **not restricted to the temple only**. Observance of the domestic Passover was allowed in the city of Jerusalem and in the towns within the greater festival area surrounding the city.* Furthermore, the fact that Ezra endorsed the temple sacrifice of the Passover, due to the circumstances of his day, cannot be used as evidence that Ezra instituted the change to a 14/15 Passover. In his account of the temple-centered Passover that was kept by the returned exiles, Ezra makes it clear that this observance took place **entirely on the 14th**.

As we learned in Chapter Two of this book, they "**kept**" (Hebrew *asah*, which includes **both killing and eating**) the Passover on the 14th day of the first month, as commanded by God (Ezra 6:19-22). Although the lambs were slain at the temple area, they were not slain on the afternoon of the 14th. Since only a few thousand people were observing this Passover, the number of the lambs was not too great to complete the slaying within the time frame commanded by God—at the beginning of the 14th during *ben ha arbayim*. In recording that the temple-centered Passover in his day was observed completely on the 14th, Ezra shows that the Passover ordinances in Exodus 12 had not been forsaken.

As we examine the historical records of Ezra's centralization of the Passover, let us keep in mind that Ezra's motive was to preserve and uphold the laws of God. The temple-centered Passover was instituted **to protect the true worship of God**. It was not instituted to alter or abolish the ordinances that God had delivered to Moses.

Ezra's Status Among the Jews and Official Authority Within the Government of the Persian Empire

Ezra held a high position among his people: "In the official [religious] hierarchy, Ezra held a double office. He was the priest, the acknowledged religious leader of his own people, the Jews of Babylonia, the ancestor of the 'head of the exile' in later times..." (Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, p. 304).

** When there was an extremely large number of pilgrims, the city of Jerusalem alone could not contain them. Edersheim relates, "How large the number of worshippers was, may be gathered from Josephus, who records that, when Cestius requested the high-priest to make a census, in order to convince Nero of the importance of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation, the number of lambs slain was found to be 256,500, which...would give a population of 2,565,000, or, as Josephus himself puts it, 2,700,200 persons, while on an earlier occasion (A.D. 65) he computes the number present at not fewer than three millions.* ***Of course, many of these pilgrims must have camped outside the city walls....It is deeply interesting that the Talmud (Pes. 53) specially mentions Bethphage and Bethany as celebrated for their hospitality towards the festive pilgrims****" (The Temple, Its Ministry and Services, As They Were at the Time of Christ, p. 215 and footnote 5). These cities, and others in the vicinity of Jerusalem, were considered an extension of Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the festivals. The occasion of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem indicates that Bethlehem was included in the festival area surrounding Jerusalem, hereafter referred to as "****the greater festival area****."*

Ezra was the "acknowledged religious leader" because he was the great-grandson of Hilkiah, who served as high priest during Josiah's reign (Ezra 7:1, II Chron. 34:9). Ezra had inherited the right of the priesthood and was therefore leader of all the Jewish exiles, which made him the highest authority for the Jews in religious matters.

Like other leading Jews, Ezra also held a position of authority in the Persian Empire. As Olmstead relates, "Jews of Babylonia were often substantial citizens. As against the natives, they could be trusted to be loyal [to the Persian king]. Some of them were already in minor administrative positions" (Ibid., p. 304).

God granted Ezra great favor in the eyes of King Artaxerxes of Persia, who authorized him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and resettle the Jewish exiles in their own land. Shortly before Ezra was sent to Jerusalem, Mordecai, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, was elevated to second in charge of the empire.

Jewish influence in the Persian Empire was greatly expanded after the overthrow of Haman and his co-conspirators, who had attempted to execute all Jews in the realm. As a result of God's intervention through Esther and Mordecai, King Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus) reversed Haman's order and instead issued orders for the execution of the enemies of the Jews throughout the empire. So powerful was this deliverance by God that many heathen in the Persian Empire converted to the Jews' religion. (See the book of Esther.)

Before sending Ezra to Jerusalem, the king made him head of the Jews in Babylonia. As Olmstead explains, Ezra was expected to use his authority to ensure that the Jews remained loyal to the Persian Empire: "Persia was tolerant of the various ethnic religions but insisted that their cults should be well organized under responsible leadership and that religion should never mask plans for rebellion. The head of the Jewish community in Babylonia was charged with the administration of its own new lawbook, significantly named data like the king's law; he might be expected to remain loyal to the royal lawbook [of the Persian Empire] to which he owed his authority as to that which laid down the procedure for the Jewish religion. **As an officer of state, Ezra was granted unusual privileges**..." (Ibid., pp. 304 -305, emphasis added).

While King Artaxerxes' major concern was that the Jews remain loyal to his empire, Ezra's main concern was that the Jews remain loyal to the laws of God. As Olmstead writes, "...he was also the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, or as we might say, the secretary of state of Jewish affairs, responsible to the king for his community. Though he was interested in a genuine colonization of the weak Jerusalem, **his chief desire was to introduce to the Jews of Palestine the still unknown Law (Torah) of Moses as set forth in a *new lawbook***" (Ibid., p. 304).

When Ezra brought this new lawbook to Jerusalem, he was dispatched by the order of King Artaxerxes with the official authority of the Persian Empire. He had received a charter from the king, which included

both legal and financial support to rebuild the temple and restore the former sacrifices to "the God of heaven" (Ezra 7:1-28). As the official representative of King Artaxerxes, he was granted full authority to enforce all civil and religious laws and to punish those who rebelled. Here are the final words of the king's decree: "And now you, Ezra, after the wisdom of your God that *is* in your hand, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people who *are* beyond the River, all who know the laws of your God; and you teach them who do not know. **And whoever will not do the law of your God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it is* to death, or to exile, or to confiscation of goods, or imprisonment**" (Ezra 7:25-26).

When Ezra and his company arrived in Jerusalem, they immediately set about to fulfill the king's decree by educating the people in the laws of God. Their first step was to translate the new lawbook into Aramaic, which was the current language of the Jews: "Ezra was ready to present the new lawbook. Naturally, it was written in the ancient Hebrew, for all the sacred prescriptions were now assigned to the great lawgiver Moses; as naturally, the majority of Ezra's hearers did not fully understand it, for they spoke the current Aramaic. Accordingly, with the first introduction of the new lawbook to the Palestinian Jews came the practice of giving a translation into the vernacular. [See Nehemiah 8.] The 'original' words of Moses were, of course, read in the sacred language, but the translation was spoken, and we may be sure that from the beginning a written Aramaic copy had been prepared to serve as an aid for the translators and to guarantee the accuracy of the translation" (Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, pp. 306-307).

In compiling the books of Moses into a new lawbook, Ezra was attempting to restore and preserve the knowledge of God's laws. As part of his work, he made changes in the text to make it more understandable for the Jews of his day. It is likely that the modifications in Deuteronomy 16 were included in this editing by Ezra. Olmstead describes the profound impact of Ezra's work:

"Day after day the reading and translation continued until the task was completed. The great work of Ezra was done. The lawbook of Moses was henceforth accepted as authoritative. Its influence cannot possibly be exaggerated. Whoever may be conjectured as the author of the lawbook, to which in fact many hands through the centuries had contributed, Ezra was rightly considered the second founder of Judaism, inferior only to Moses himself" (Ibid., p. 307).

In reintroducing God's laws to the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea, Ezra was confronted with a major problem. Contrary to God's command in the book of Deuteronomy, many of the Jews, including a number of priests and Levites, had intermarried with the surrounding heathen nations. As the religious leader, it was Ezra's duty to order these unfaithful Jews to put away their foreign wives. Olmstead writes, "The great work of Ezra, the introduction of the law, was completed. There remained only enforcement in detail. Of the needed reforms, the most pressing was the abolition of the mixed marriages, through all centuries the most dangerous threat to

Judaism" (Ibid., p. 307). It was, in fact, these mixed marriages which led to a new threat to the true worship of God by the Jews.

Threat of the New Jewish/Samaritan Religion and Temple

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the grievous sin of the returned exiles in again intermarrying with the people of the land. Many of the priests and rulers of the people were leaders in this unfaithfulness. After responding to Ezra's demand with fasting and prayers of repentance, the majority of the people put away their foreign wives and returned to God's ways. Some, however, persisted in their sin against God. Here is Nehemiah's record of his confrontation with them: "In those days I also saw Jews who had married women *from* Ashdod, Ammon, *and* from Moab. And their children spoke half Ashdod's language and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and struck *certain* of them, and plucked off their hair. And I made them swear by the name of God, saying, 'You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Yet even him did foreign women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken to you, to do all this **great evil, to sin against our God** in marrying foreign women?'

"And *one* of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, *was* son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite [governor of Samaria]; and I chased him from me. **Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites**" (Neh. 13:23-29).

Nehemiah's denunciation of these unfaithful Jews reveals his great anger at their callous disregard for God's law. His greatest indignation was directed toward the priests and Levites who had sinned, as it was their responsibility to teach and uphold the laws of God. Although many of these priests took heed to his words and put away their foreign wives, a number of them refused to repent. A leading figure in this rebellion was one of the sons of the high priest. Nehemiah does not name him in his account, but Josephus records that his name was Manasseh. Manasseh, a son of the high priest Joiada, had married the daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. As a son of Joiada, Manasseh was eligible to succeed his father in the office of high priest. What a dilemma this posed! If Manasseh became the next high priest, the priestly line would be polluted by foreign blood. Ezra and Nehemiah could not allow the priesthood to be corrupted. Manasseh had to be banished along with the other priests and Levites who likewise refused to put away their foreign wives.

Manasseh's father-in-law, Sanballat, offered the renegade priests a proposition they could not refuse. Sanballat proposed that a temple be built in Samaria, like the one in Jerusalem, and that Manasseh and the other banished priests officiate at this new temple. As governor of Samaria, Sanballat had undoubtedly obtained permission from the king to build this temple.

This step would prevent any accusations of rebellion against the Persian Empire or of promoting conflict between Samaria and Judea. As a result, Ezra was unable to use his own authority from the king to force Manasseh and the renegade priests in Samaria to cease and desist. Because they were beyond the power of Ezra's civil and religious jurisdiction, the revolt of Manasseh succeeded.

Under Sanballat's jurisdiction, a temple was built on Mount Gerizim, which was originally the Mount of Blessing for the children of Israel (Deut. 27:12). Now Samaria had a temple similar to the one in Jerusalem. Manasseh, a descendant of Aaron, was high priest, and he had a whole corps of Levites as assistant priests. They were setting up a "Moses-like religion" that would compete with the true worship of God. For their Scriptural authority, they claimed and used the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, called the Torah. (See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, Chapters 7 and 8.) They offered the commanded sacrifices, observed the Sabbath, festivals and holy days, and fulfilled all the requirements of the Torah—with the exception of the law against intermarriage. Because they had their own temple and their own priesthood, they did not have to comply with the law against intermarriage. They were now under Sanballat's jurisdiction, where they were safe from any interference by Ezra and Nehemiah. Through their counterfeit religion, they could begin to influence Jews everywhere in the empire.

What an alarming turn of events! What an absolute disaster this could bring! Only sixty miles north of Jerusalem was a competing religion, a new Jewish/Samaritan religion, with authentic copies of the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. Because the founders of this religion had rebelled against the law of God, it was obvious that they did not respect His Word. They would not hesitate to alter the text to suit their own purposes. The Scriptures were in great danger of being corrupted.

At that time in history, there was no official text of the Word of God. The Old Testament, as we know it today, did not yet exist. The books that would become the Old Testament were written on scrolls in the ancient Hebrew script. Manasseh and the other rebel priests and Levites were using these scrolls of the books of Moses at their temple in Samaria. (To this day, the Samaritan Scriptures are written in the style of the ancient Hebrew script.) Since there was no official text of the Scriptures, Manasseh could claim that he also had the Word of God. He may even have claimed that he had the newest revelation of God in order to justify setting himself up as a high priest in competition with the priests in Jerusalem.

In order to present an appearance of authenticity and religious correctness, these Jewish/Samaritan priests apparently observed the Passover exactly as commanded in the Book of Exodus. After all, did they not profess to follow the Torah? Did it not contain the Passover instructions that God had delivered to Moses? Yes! But although they kept the Passover according to the commands of God, they were opposing God because they had broken His laws for the priesthood and had set up their own priesthood and their own religion.

To this day, the members of this Samaritan religion keep their Passover at the beginning of the 14th, in the same manner as their ancestors. The fact that this Jewish/Samaritan sect has always observed a domestic Passover indicates that the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs was not the practice in Jerusalem when their religion was founded. The following description of their Passover confirms that it has not changed from the original domestic observance:

"They, therefore, observe Pesach **exactly as it was observed two or three thousand years ago** [emphasis added]....Modern historical research has proved that the Samaritans are not descendants of the heathen colonists settled in the northern kingdom by the conquerors of Samaria, as was once assumed....Actually the Samaritans of today are a small and poor remnant of **an old and great Jewish sect**....The only religious books that they possess, however, are the Pentateuch and Joshua....these two hundred [remnant] Samaritans observe Pesach to this day on Mount Gerizim, in a manner that other Jews ceased practising thousands of years ago. The custom of offering sacrifices has died out with the Samaritans, except **on the fourteenth day of Nisan, when they offer the ceremonial Pesach sacrifice**" (Schluss, *The Jewish Festivals*, pp. 60-61).

The founding of this Jewish/Samaritan religion posed a grave threat to the Jewish people in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The rebel priesthood in Samaria was teaching the laws of the Torah and observing the Passover according to the commands of God. They professed to worship God, when in reality their temple and priesthood had been established in rebellion against God. In Jerusalem were the faithful Jews who had not rebelled, but who had remained loyal to God and had obeyed Ezra and Nehemiah. They had the true temple of God and the entire Word of God—though not yet canonized—and they worshiped in Jerusalem, the city that God had chosen. Now this small remnant of faithful Jews was in danger of being corrupted and led astray by the counterfeit religion in Samaria.

The new Samaritan religion created enormous problems for Ezra. There was great danger that this Jewish/Samaritan religion would spread to Jews in all parts of the empire. What if the Jewish people who dwelt in Jerusalem were led astray? He must take decisive action to ensure that the newly returned exiles did not bring upon themselves the divine retribution of another captivity. He must act to preserve the true worship of God.

Ezra's Solution to the Jewish/Samaritan Threat

Only a short time after their return from the Babylonian exile, the survival of the Jewish people was again being threatened. Manasseh's rebellion and false religion was flying in the face of God. Through the mercy of God, the Jews at Jerusalem had been granted the blessing of returning to Judea, their native land. God had also blessed them with grace and favor in the eyes of the Persian emperor, who had granted them freedom from taxation, large sums of money and supplies of gold and silver to rebuild the temple, and gifts of animals to reinstitute the sacrificial offerings to God. Now the restoration of the true worship of God was being

endangered by the rebellion of Manasseh and his fellow priests, and the advent of the new religion in Samaria with its competing temple service and sacrifices. If the Jewish people began to apostatize and follow this counterfeit religion, God would punish them severely. They would surely be appointed to death or captivity.

Ezra and Nehemiah had to take immediate action to pull the remnant of the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea together. They had to use their power and authority as religious leaders to preserve the true worship of God. They were confronting a competing religion, which professed to uphold the laws of Moses. Its temple stood on Mount Gerizim, the Mount of Blessing, near Jacob's well. Something drastic had to be done, and it had to be done quickly! The true worship of God had to be protected from being corrupted by the Jewish/Samaritan religion.

To accomplish this task, Ezra and the Great Assembly began to exercise firm authority over every religious practice of the Jews. The Great Assembly supervised and regulated the temple rites and sacrifices, priestly laws, synagogue rituals, and everything associated with religion! Every religious practice had to be approved by Ezra and the Great Assembly and had to be centered at the temple in Jerusalem. Every act of worship had to be thoroughly and completely Jewish—AND ADAMANTLY ANTI-SAMARITAN!

In order to preserve the true worship of God, it was essential to differentiate the Scriptures of the Jerusalem Jews from the Scriptures of the Jewish/Samaritan religion. The first step was to set the Scriptures in order and canonize each book as the authentic Word of God. When this work was completed, accurate copies of the entire text had to be made and distributed to Jewish synagogues throughout the empire. Once canonized, the Word of God could be preserved for all time. Here is a summary of Ezra's work, which was a monumental step in the development and preservation of the Old Testament for the Jewish people, and eventually for the world:

"According to Jewish tradition, five great works are ascribed to him: (1) the foundation of the 'Great Synagogue' [the Great Assembly], (2) the settlement of the canon of Scripture, with the threefold division into Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa [the Psalms and other Writings], (3) **the substitution of the square Chaldee characters for the Hebrew and Samaritan**, (4) the compilation of Chronicles, possibly Esther, with the addition of Nehemiah's history to his own, and (5) the establishment of synagogues" (Angus, *The Bible Handbook*, p. 542).

As stated above, one major task that Ezra undertook was to change all the Hebrew letters in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to the square Chaldee script, or the block style. This lettering was commonly used in the sixth century BC in Babylon and elsewhere in the Persian Empire. Ezra's purpose in replacing the ancient script was to preserve the Word of God from being corrupted by Samaritan influences and to differentiate the official Jerusalem Scriptures from the Samaritan version. As Martin explains, "This was not done simply to facilitate the reading of the Bible but, more

importantly, Ezra was able to establish at one fell swoop an official canon of the scriptures which was now (by the use of the new letter configurations) able to be distinguished from heretical Samaritan manuscripts which were written in the old Hebrew script" (*The Original Bible Restored*, p. 63).

As part of the canonization of the Scriptures, Ezra also edited the books which became the Old Testament. This editing included the substitution of current terminology for ancient names that were no longer in use. When old names were retained, explanatory phrases were sometimes added to identify them. These minor changes helped to update the text and make it more understandable to the people of Ezra's day. As Martin shows, there were no major alterations to the text: "...Ezra felt that the Old Testament needed editing to allow the Jewish nation of his time to have the complete and full revelation of God in the Hebrew language. **Ezra's additions were not vast changes in the text of the Old Testament**" (Ibid., p.102, emphasis added).

Ernst Wurthwein, one of the most well known experts in the text of the Old Testament, verifies the legitimacy of the alterations that were made before the text was canonized: "Before the text of the Old Testament was officially established it was not regarded as unalterable. Accordingly we should expect to find that those who were concerned with the transmission of the text would occasionally make deliberate, fully intentional alterations in the text. In evaluating these alterations we must avoid thinking of them as 'corruptions.' **They were made in good faith**, with no intention of introducing a foreign element into the text, but rather **with the aim of restoring the true text** and (from the copyist's view) preventing misunderstandings. They must have originated **in a period when the letter of the text could still be changed in order to express its message more effectively** for its readership and audience.

"It is quite natural that a text which was not simply the object of scholarly study but intended to be read constantly by the whole of the Jewish community would be adapted to the linguistic needs of the community....Since the wording of the text was subject to variation **before it was officially established, it was also possible to substitute acceptable expressions** for ones which were morally or religiously offensive" (*The Text of The Old Testament*, pp. 108-110).

Wurthwein adds the following statement concerning the editing that was done by Ezra and those before him: "**The editorial activity** which we glimpse in these deliberate alterations **was in respects official**, and may be traced to an early period. This is a wide field which unfortunately has not yet been examined as systematically as it deserves" (Ibid., p. 110).

Although a few alterations were made in the text of the Old Testament after its canonization, there is no question that Ezra was the one who compiled the books, edited them and canonized them. A number of books had been canonized earlier by righteous kings of Israel and Judah, but it was Ezra who established the final official text of the Old Testament. Martin writes, "Furthermore, though various suggestions as to which books David,

Solomon, Hezekiah, etc. saw fit to canonize have been made in previous pages of this book, this was mainly possible because of hints given in Ezra's book of Chronicles. It was Ezra (the 'Second Moses') who gave to the Jewish world the official (and final) Old Testament to be read in the Temple and synagogues. This makes the canonization by Ezra the most important of all" (*The Original Bible Restored*, p. 102).

In editing the text, Ezra was simply following the precedent set by Moses and Samuel, who made minor alterations and additions in the Book of the Law as necessitated by changes in terminology and national conditions. Martin describes the editing that was done by these three faithful servants of God: "Ezra's additions were not vast changes in the text of the Old Testament. These were **small edits**, mostly in earlier portions of the Law. His editorial comments were mainly restricted to simple parenthetical expressions explaining to the Jews of his time the **contemporary geographical names** of ancient places and towns that had been changed over the years....Even **Moses introduced** into the ancient records geographical terms familiar to Israelites of his time (Gen. 2:14). **This procedure adopted by Moses also gave Ezra the authority** to do the same.

"**The prophet Samuel** did a similar type of editing in his day....This seems certain. Samuel **inserted the rules concerning the kingship** into the Law of Moses—the books which were preserved in the sleeves of the Ark (see Deut. 31:26). It is evident that the Law did not contain the rules of the kingdom prior to Samuel. Note that when the people clamored for a king in Samuel's day, they presented no appeal to the Law of Moses for support. Samuel himself was upset by the mere suggestion of having a king. Had the rules concerning the kingdom been already within the Book of Deuteronomy, there would have been no need for Samuel to express displeasure" (Ibid., pp. 102-103).

Like Moses and Samuel, Ezra's sole purpose in editing the text was to make the Scriptures more understandable for the people of his day. When the work of editing and canonizing the Scriptures was completed, the official text was entrusted to the priests in Jerusalem for safekeeping. The Great Assembly was appointed to oversee the interpretation of the text and to settle any disputes that arose. Martin relates the following facts from the Talmud and Apocrypha: "Ezra arranged the authorized scrolls into a proper order for teaching the people and deposited them with the priests in the archives of the Temple (Deut. 17:18; 31:9). A group of 120 priests were ordained to be the Supreme Court of the land (**known as the Great Assembly), of whom Ezra was the chief** (Hereford, *Talmud and Apocrypha*, p. 56)" (Ibid., p. 64).

The Great Assembly was responsible for making copies of the official text of the Old Testament and distributing them to all synagogues in Judea. To protect the people from the corrupting influence of the apostate Jewish/Samaritan religion, it was necessary to have complete, officially authorized copies of the Scriptures in every synagogue in Judea and everywhere that Jews lived in the Persian Empire. Instituted at the same time was

a mandatory scheduled reading of the Scriptures in the temple and the synagogues on every weekly Sabbath and every annual holy day. This mandatory reading was called the "triennial cycle" because it took three years to complete the reading of the entire Old Testament. Ezra knew that the best way to combat the counterfeit religion in Samaria was to educate the Jewish people in the officially authorized Scriptures.

As we continue our study of the Old Testament Passover, it is important to remember that the text of the Old Testament as we know it today was compiled and edited by Ezra. Although some editing may have been done by members of the Great Assembly after Ezra's death, it is Ezra who was responsible for the final text of the Old Testament. It is Ezra who preserved the origin and history of the temple-centered Passover, giving us the only Scriptural record of the circumstances which led to the centralized observance of the Passover in the days of the kings of Judah.

Ezra Reveals Origin of Temple-Centered Passover

Ezra's accounts in the second book of Chronicles are the only Scriptures that reveal the origin of the temple-centered Passover observance. **Only Ezra records the details of the epochal Passovers of Hezekiah and Josiah**. In the account of Hezekiah's reign in II Kings 18-20, there is not one reference to the observance of the Passover. While the Passover of Josiah is briefly mentioned in II Kings 23, it is not described in detail. Without Ezra's accounts in II Chronicles 30 and 35, we would know nothing whatsoever of Hezekiah's Passover, and we would not know that Josiah's Passover was centered at the temple.

When we examine Ezra's accounts of these two temple-centered observances, we find a revealing change in the usage of the term "Passover." In his account of Hezekiah's Passover, Ezra states, "And **they killed the Passover**, on the fourteenth *day* of the second month" (II Chron. 30:15, *JPSA*). Later in this account, he describes the offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which he refers to as "peace-offerings":

"And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem **kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days** with great gladness....And they ate the appointed things seven days, **offering peace offerings** and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers" (II Chron. 30:21-22).

When we compare this account with the account of Josiah's Passover in II Chronicles 35, we find a distinct difference in terminology. This change reflects the later practice of the Jews. Notice: "And Josiah gave to the people from the flocks, lambs and kids, all for the **Passover offerings**, for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand oxen....And his princes...for the **Passover offerings** two thousand six hundred *sheep*, and three hundred oxen.... [The] chiefs of the Levites gave...for **Passover offerings** five thousand *sheep*, and five hundred oxen" (II Chron. 35:7-9).

As the account shows, the **Passover offerings** included offerings from the herd—bullocks and oxen—which were bovine and therefore could not be used for the Passover sacrifice. Since the sacrifice for the Passover was taken only from the sheep or the goats, it is obvious that these **Passover offerings** were not for the Passover day. Ezra makes a clear distinction between the sacrifice of the Passover lamb and the later **Passover offerings**: "...And they killed the Passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month....And Josiah gave...for the **Passover offerings**...three thousand oxen" (II Chron. 35:1, 7).

These "**Passover offerings**" were actually **peace offerings** for the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Ezra confirms this fact by calling these same offerings "**peace offerings**" in II Chronicles 30:22. Although he uses the original term for these offerings in this earlier account, he chose to use the terminology of his own day in the account in II Chronicles 35. This account is the last Scriptural record of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread before the Babylonian captivity. By using the terminology of his day, Ezra helped the returned exiles to link their observance of this eight-day festival with its observance by their ancestors in the kingdom of Judah.

The terminology that Ezra uses in II Chronicles 35 is the same terminology that we find in Deuteronomy 16. The offerings that are commanded in Deuteronomy 16 are also referred to as **Passover offerings** and include sacrifices from the herd as well as the flock: "And you shall therefore sacrifice the Passover offering to the LORD your God, of the flock and the herd....You may not sacrifice the Passover offering within any of your gates...you shall sacrifice the Passover offering..." (Deut. 16:2, 5, 6).

The fact that the terminology in Deuteronomy 16 is identical to the terminology in II Chronicles 35 points directly to editing by Ezra. As II Chronicles is the final book in the Hebrew Scriptures, so Deuteronomy 16 is the final book in the Pentateuch, or Book of the Law. By replacing the ancient terminology in Deuteronomy 16 with the current terminology of the Jews, Ezra established an additional link for the people of his day. They could trace their Passover practice not only to the time of the kingdom of Judah, but to the days of Moses and the giving of the Law.

The Jews of Ezra's day did not confuse the "**Passover offering**" with the sacrifice of the Passover lambs, because they were accustomed to calling the Feast of Unleavened Bread by the name "Passover." They knew that the commands for the "peace offerings" in Deuteronomy 16 did not fit God's commands for the Passover in Exodus 12. The Passover sacrifice was taken only from the flock and commemorated the Lord's passing over the children of Israel, sparing their firstborn.

Those who claim that the term "Passover offering" refers to the Passover lambs are ignoring the Scriptural facts. The context in which this term is used in Deuteronomy 16 clearly shows that it does not refer to the Passover sacrifice, but to the peace offerings that began on the following night—the "night to be much observed." Ezra's use of the term "Passover

offering" in II Chronicles 35 verifies this fact. It is also confirmed by his account in II Chronicles 30, in which he uses the term "peace offering" for the same offerings. This synonymous use of the terms "Passover offering" and "peace offering" shows that these sacrifices were offered on the night of the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Because the term "passover" may refer to observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the meaning of this term in any passage must be determined by the context in which it is used. A careful examination of the context will reveal whether the word "passover" refers to the observance of the 14th, the Passover day, or to the observance of the 15th.

Let us apply this rule to a verse in the book of Joshua that has been used to promote the teaching of a 15th Passover: "And the children of Israel camped in Gilgal and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening [*ba erev*, or sunset]..." (Joshua 5:10).

This observance took place at the end of the forty years of wandering, after the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. The advocates of a 15th Passover argue that this verse is describing a late 14/early 15 Passover observance. They claim that the lambs were slain on the afternoon of the 14th and were eaten after sunset, when the 15th day began. Let us examine this argument in the light of the Hebrew text.

Joshua records that the children of Israel "kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening." The word "kept" is translated from the Hebrew word *asah*, which means to "observe" or "celebrate" (Brown, Drivers, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*). The words "at evening" are translated from the Hebrew *ba erev*, which means "at sunset." Since sunset lasts for only a few minutes, it was not possible for the children of Israel to "keep" (*asah*) the Passover by killing and eating it during the time that Joshua records in his account. It is apparent that *ba erev* is designating the point in time at which the observance began. The children of Israel began to observe this Passover at sunset—not in the afternoon hours of the day, as the advocates of a 15th Passover claim.

As we learned in Chapter Four, each day begins and ends at sunset, or *ba erev*. To determine whether the sunset in Joshua 5:10 occurred at the beginning of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th, we must examine the context.

In the previous chapter, Joshua records that the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land on the 10th day of the first month (Josh. 4:19). On this same day, God required all the males who had been born in the wilderness to be circumcised (Josh. 5:2-7). This was necessary because the Passover day was nearing, and no uncircumcised male was permitted to eat of it. (Ex. 12:48). The newly circumcised men of Israel rested in the camp until they were whole (verse 8). Verse 10 records the observance of the Passover "on the fourteenth day at evening." Verse

11 states that on the day after this Passover, the children of Israel ate unleavened bread made of the harvest of the land. Verse 12 records that the manna ceased on the day after they ate of the harvest. *For a technical exegesis of Joshua 5:10, see Appendix O.*

When we examine the sequence of events in Joshua's account, it is evident that he is relating the observance of Israel's first Passover in the Promised Land, which was kept entirely on the 14th day of the first month, as commanded by God in Exodus 12. On the following day, the children of Israel began their observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The fact that they ate unleavened grain which was harvested from the land shows that the first day of this feast was the Wave Sheaf Day. (A detailed chronology of the events in Joshua 4 and 5 is presented in the booklet *Understanding God's Command for the Wave Sheaf* by Dwight Blevins, published by the Christian Biblical Church of God.)

When we let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures, there is no doubt as to when the Passover in Joshua 5:10 was observed. The use of *ba erev* shows that this observance of the Passover did not begin in the afternoon of the 14th. It was not observed partly on the 14th and partly on the 15th, but was both sacrificed and eaten on the 14th day of the month.

The Passover was not combined with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Joshua's day, nor were the two feasts combined by Ezra. Although Ezra authorized a temple-centered Passover, he did not reduce the observance of the two feasts from the original total of eight days to seven days. His account of the first temple-centered observance by the returned exiles shows that the Passover was kept on the 14th day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was kept for seven additional days (Ezra 6:18-22).

The fact that Ezra restricted the observance of the Passover to the greater festival area of Jerusalem does not mean that he authorized changing the Passover from the 14th to the 15th, as some claim. His "new Passover law" was not intended to replace or abolish the domestic observance of the Passover with a temple sacrifice of the lambs on the afternoon of the 14th. Ezra's records of the early temple-centered Passovers in Old Testament times reveal that this practice was not instituted by God, but by the kings of Judah. It was not officially adopted by Judaism until more than a thousand years after the Passover in Egypt.

Although the destruction of the temple ended all centralized Passover observances, the Jews never returned to the 14th Passover. The modern remnant of the early temple-centered Passover is the 15th Seder meal, which is now the accepted Jewish tradition. The leaders of Judaism claim that this tradition follows the command of God. But a 15th Passover observance IS NOT COMMANDED IN THE SCRIPTURES AND CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED BY THE SCRIPTURES! No 14/15 Passover observance can be made to harmonize with the ordinances of God as recorded in Exodus 12, regardless of how clever the argument. The 14/15 Passover does not carry the authority of God!

Why Ezra Centralized the Passover and Enforced the New Law Throughout the Empire

Ezra knew that the temple-centered Passover, which was originally instituted by the kings of Judah, could not replace the ordinances of God. But he also knew that God had accepted the temple-centered Passovers in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah due to the unfaithfulness of the Jews in those times. In view of the rebellion of Manasseh and his co-conspirators, it is not surprising that Ezra decided to centralize the Passover at Jerusalem.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah indicate that the observance of the Passover was restricted to Jerusalem and the greater festival area because of the apostatizing of the Jews and the establishing of the competing Jewish/ Samaritan religion by Manasseh. In order to combat this counterfeit religion, Ezra forbade the offering of any sacrifices to God except at the temple in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, he also restricted the domestic killing of the Passover lambs to the vicinity of Jerusalem. This command was called "the new Passover law." To stop the Jewish/Samaritan rebellion from spreading, Ezra used the power granted by the Persian Empire to enforce this law. Thus the true worship of God was preserved by a remnant of faithful Jews and was passed down to New Testament times.

There are solid historical records which document the centralizing of the Passover at Jerusalem by Ezra. The following evidence dates back to the time of the Persian Empire: "Discovery of archives from a Jewish mercenary colony [Jewish mercenary soldiers in the Persian army] near the first Egyptian cataract [in southern Egypt] was truly sensational. Here were the closest parallels in language and in style to the Aramaic of Ezra. Rescripts from Persian kings were cited in Ezra [the letters from King Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:11-26]; Old Testament critics had declared them unauthentic, but now there was ample proof that the critics themselves were in the wrong. For comparison with these once-disputed decrees, there was now still another [empirical Persian decree by Darius Hystaspes], where a later monarch enforced compliance by these distant Jewish heretics [the mercenary colony at the Egyptian first cataract] with the recently promulgated Passover Law" (Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, p. *x*, Preface).

At Elephantine in southern Egypt, a colony of apostate Levites had built another competing temple where animal sacrifices were being offered. This additional competition added to the problems that Ezra was facing in his efforts to combat the Samaritan heresy. To stem these apostate religions, Ezra used the powers that Artaxerxes had granted him to enforce the new law—that all animal sacrifices, including the Passover lambs, be restricted to Jerusalem and its environs. This edict was proclaimed to the Jewish colony at Elephantine: "Through the satrap Arsames, as announced to the mercenaries at Elephantine by a certain Hananiah [brother of Nehemiah], **the king sent...a rescript enforcing the Passover celebration according to the lawbook recently introduced into Judah by Ezra**" (Ibid., p. 358, emphasis added).

Those at Elephantine apparently did not comply with the edict to cease offering sacrifices at their temple, and after nine years the temple was destroyed by the Egyptians: "Egyptian support had eventually been secured by a promise to destroy the Jewish temple, so offensive to popular sentiments because of its animal sacrifices. Nephayan led out his Egyptian and other standards. The temple was razed to the ground, its stone pillars were broken, its five gateways of cut stone were torn down, its doors (whose hinges were shod with bronze) and its roof of cedar were burned, and its gold and silver utensils were looted" (Ibid., pp.364-365).

For three years the Jews at Elephantine tried to rebuild their temple, even appealing to Ezra in Jerusalem for help, which of course was in vain. The destruction of that temple had solved a great problem for Ezra and Nehemiah. The Jewish leaders of Elephantine also appealed to Sanballat to assist in the rebuilding, but Sanballat was not able to help (Ibid., pp. 366-367).

These records confirm the institution and enforcement of the "new Passover law," which centralized the Passover at Jerusalem and prohibited any sacrifices at other locations in the Persian Empire. The "new Passover law" made it mandatory for those who were still living in exile to travel to Jerusalem in order to sacrifice the Passover. Thus, for those who were living in exile, any observance of the 14th was eliminated. This strict prohibition against sacrificing the Passover in a land of exile led to the practice of using a token shank bone for the Jewish Passover meal. This meal was named the Seder and was eaten on the 15th day of the first month—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Seder eventually replaced the observance of the 14th Passover even by Jews who were living in the land of Israel. The Jews today no longer recognize the 14th as the Passover day but refer to the 15th as "the first day of Passover."

Although it was called the "new Passover law," Ezra's prohibition against observing the Passover in foreign lands was not new at all. From the time that the ancestors of the Jews entered the Promised Land, they were forbidden to observe the Passover in other lands. This command was included in the ordinances of the Passover, as recorded in Numbers 9. In imposing the "new Passover law," Ezra was simply upholding the ordinance that God had delivered to Moses.

In the next chapter, we will examine the Scriptures concerning this ordinance in the book of Numbers, and we will learn why those who were in exile were forbidden to observe the Passover. As we will see, those who were exiled not only were separated from their land but were also removed from the covenant relationship with God.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

NO PASSOVER FOR THE EXILED

When God delivered the ordinances of the Passover to Moses, the children of Israel were a people in bondage. By fulfilling God's commands for the Passover, they demonstrated their faith in His proclamation that He would deliver them from their slavery in Egypt and would lead them to the Promised Land, as He had sworn to their forefather Abraham. The Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt was a direct fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. The Scriptures record that these covenant promises were confirmed to Isaac and Jacob because Abraham obeyed God's voice and kept all the laws and commandments and statutes of God (Gen. 26:5). When the children of Israel entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai, they also pledged to obey all the commandments, statutes and ordinances of God, and their pledge was sealed with the blood of sacrificial animals (Ex. 24:7-8).

The covenant that God made with Abraham was the foundation of the covenant that He established with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. Under the terms of this covenant, known today as the Old Covenant, the people of Israel were offered many physical and material blessings for obedience—including good health, abundant harvests, and peace throughout the land. But the Old Covenant imposed grievous curses for disobedience—famine and disease, war and siege, and ultimately exile from the land that God had given them.

Deuteronomy 28 records all the blessings and curses of the covenant that God established with Israel. The blessings for obedience are set forth in Verses 1-14; and the curses are listed in vivid detail in Verses 15-68. Among the severe penalties for disobedience, God warned of invasion and captivity: "You shall beget sons and daughters, but you shall not enjoy them, for they shall go into captivity....The stranger *dwelling* among you shall get up above you very high, you shall come down very low. He shall loan to you, and you shall not loan to him. He shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. And all these curses shall come on you, and shall pursue you and overtake you, until you are destroyed **because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God** to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.

"And they shall be on you for a sign and for a wonder, and on your seed forever. **Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart** for the abundance of all *things,* therefore you shall serve your enemies which the LORD shall send against you in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all *things.* And he shall put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. **The LORD shall bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth as the eagle flies**..." (Deut. 28:41-49).

This dreadful curse of war and captivity was clearly laid out before the children of Israel when they covenanted with God at Mount Sinai. They were well aware of the punishment that would befall them if they did not obey all that God had commanded. When the new generation entered the Promised Land, the men of the twelve tribes were required to stand on the tops of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim while the Levites read all the blessings and the curses that were written in the covenant. As the men of Israel repeated each blessing and each curse, all the people said "Amen," binding themselves to the covenant with full knowledge of the penalties for disobedience (Deut. 27:9-26).

Moses Prophesies the Captivity of Israel

Although the children of Israel had pledged to obey the commandments of God and keep His covenant, Moses knew that they were a stiff-necked people. He had witnessed their hardheartedness and disobedience time and time again during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Now, as they prepared to enter the Promised Land, he foresaw a time when the sins of Israel would become so great that the people would be removed from the land and be sentenced to live in captivity among their enemies.

Moses' prophecy concerning the future sins and the resulting captivity of Israel is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses warned the children of Israel that the time would come when their descendants would sin grievously against God, breaking the covenant that He had made with them. Their wickedness would so anger God that He would punish them severely and would bring upon them all the curses that were pronounced in the book of the covenant. If they stubbornly persisted in their disobedience and refused to repent, He would send oppressors who would besiege their cities and carry them out of the land to exile. Here are Moses' words of warning to Israel:

"When you shall beget children and grandchildren, and when you shall have remained long in the land and have dealt corruptly by making a graven image, the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land which you are crossing over Jordan to possess. You shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. **And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations**..." (Deut. 4:25-27).

After prophesying that Israel would be carried out of the land into captivity, Moses also prophesied a time of repentance and restoration for the remnant of Israel: "...and you shall be left **few in number** among the nations where the LORD shall drive you. And there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But if you shall seek the LORD your God from there, you shall find *Him*, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in trouble and when all these things have come upon you **in the latter days,**

then you shall return to the LORD your God and shall be obedient to His voice, for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God. He will not forsake you, nor destroy you, **nor forget the covenant of your fathers** [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob] **which He swore to them**" (Deut. 4:27-31).

These words of Moses were a powerful reminder to the children of Israel that God always keeps His word. As He had covenanted with their forefathers to bring them to the Promised Land, so He had done. As He had covenanted with them at Mount Sinai, so He would do. If they obeyed His commandments, He would bless them in the land that He had given them. If they disobeyed, He would curse them and cast them out of the land.

After delivering this warning to the children of Israel, Moses pleaded with them to remember the words that God had spoken and be diligent to keep His commandments, that they might dwell and prosper in the Promised Land. In his final charge to the children of Israel, he made it clear that obedience to God was the only way to receive His blessings and enjoy a long and good life: "Behold, I have set before you this day **life and good, and death and evil**, in that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments so that you may live and multiply. And the LORD your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it.

"But if your heart turn away so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I denounce to you this day that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days on the land where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it. **I call heaven and earth to record this day against you *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, so that both you and your seed may live, that you may love the LORD your God, *and* may obey His voice, and may cleave to Him;** for He is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob—to give it to them" (Deut. 30:15-20).

After delivering this charge to the children of Israel, Moses called Joshua and commissioned him to bring the people into the land and oversee its division among the tribes. God was with the armies of Israel as they battled the inhabitants of the land and drove them out. Although the inhabitants were not wholly removed, Joshua saw that every tribe of Israel was allotted an inheritance in the land (Judg. 2:6)

Sin and Idolatry Lead to Captivity and Exile

The children of Israel remained faithful to God all the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived him, but the following generation fell into grievous idolatry. They forsook God and broke His covenant by turning to the abominable worship of Baal and Ashteroth, or Asherah, which they had learned from the heathen inhabitants whom they had failed to drive out of the land. As punishment for their sins, God sent enemy nations against them to oppress them. When the people repented of their sins, God raised up judges to deliver them. This cycle of sin, oppression,

repentance and deliverance was repeated many times during Israel's early years in the Promised Land (Judg. 2:7-19).

The kings who reigned after the time of the judges added to the sins of Israel by filling the land with idols, groves and pillars for the worship of Baal and Asherah and a host of other false gods. The books of the Kings and the Chronicles record the gross corruption and abominable practices of the kings and people of Israel and Judah, which provoked God's wrath until He brought upon them the curse that was pronounced in the covenant—captivity and exile from the land that He had given them. Because they had forsaken God and had turned to the abominable practices of the heathen, God sent them to live among the heathen.

While the people of Israel and Judah were living in exile, they did not have a covenant relationship with God. They had broken His covenant, and He had removed them from the land. They were far from the temple of God in Jerusalem and could offer none of the sacrifices that were commanded under the covenant. Because they had polluted His altar with sacrifices to the gods of the heathen, God had allowed the temple to be destroyed. Even if the people had repented, they could not reestablish the temple service and renew their covenant with God as long as they remained in exile.

The Curse of Exile

The people of Israel and Judah were not the first sinners to be exiled for breaking a covenant relationship with God. From the time of creation, God has used the curse of exile to punish the sinful and disobedient. As the book of Genesis records, this curse was pronounced upon Adam and Eve when they sinned in the Garden of Eden.

When God spoke His commands to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He entered into a covenant with them. In a covenant relationship, there are specific commandments and laws that must be obeyed. Every covenant offers blessings for obedience and pronounces curses for disobedience. Accordingly, when God covenanted with Adam and Eve, He set before them the choice of whether to obey and receive blessings or to disobey and receive curses: "And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. **The tree of life also was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of *the* knowledge of good and evil**....And the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. And **the LORD God commanded the man**, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree in the garden, but **you shall not eat of the tree of *the* knowledge of good and evil,** for in the day that you eat of it in dying you shall surely die' " (Gen. 2:9, 15-17).

If Adam and Eve had obeyed God's command and had not eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would have remained in covenant with God, and they would have been able to eat of the tree of life. However, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God. Because they disobeyed, Adam and Eve were cut off from the blessings of God, and instead received curses. The judgment that was imposed for their sin brought suffering and

sorrow to them and to all their descendants. Here is the punishment that God pronounced upon them:

"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception—in sorrow shall you bring forth children. Your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam He said, 'Because you have hearkened to the voice of your wife [instead of hearkening to the voice of God], and have eaten of the tree—of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat *of* it!'—the ground *is* cursed for your sake. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life. It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and *thus* you shall eat the herbs of the field; in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return' " (Gen. 3:16-19).

The Exile of Adam and Eve

Because they had sinned and had not kept the covenant that God made with them, Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden. They were removed from the covenant land: "Therefore, the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he had been taken. And He drove out the man, and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:23-24).

The covenant that God had established with Adam and Eve required that they die for their sin. God could have executed the death penalty upon them immediately, but He chose not to. Instead, He sentenced them to live out their lives in toil and sorrow, exiled from the Garden of Eden and from the blessings He had offered under the covenant.

Although they could no longer enter the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were not totally cut off from God. They could approach God by coming to the east gate of the Garden of Eden, and they undoubtedly had contact with God on a periodic basis. It was probably there at the east entrance, where the two cherubim stood guard, that God established an altar for sacrifices to Him.

The judgment that God had pronounced upon Eve soon came to pass, and she experienced the travail of childbirth: "Then Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have gotten a man from the LORD.' And she bore again, his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" (Gen. 4:1-2).

Cain Kills Abel and Is Exiled

Eve's joy in seeing her two sons grow to manhood was turned to deep bitterness when her firstborn became the murderer of his own brother: "It came to pass [Josephus states that Cain and Abel, who were twins, were 130 years old (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 1, Ch. 2, Sec. 3)] that Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock *and* of the fat of it. And the LORD had

regard unto Abel and his offering, but He did not have regard unto Cain and his offering. And Cain was extremely angry and his countenance fell. And the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you so angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? But if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. Its desire *is* for you, but you must rule over it!' And Cain talked with his brother Abel. And it came to pass that when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

"And the LORD said unto Cain, 'Where *is* your brother Abel?' And he said, 'I do not know. *Am* I my brother's keeper?' And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground. And now **you *are* cursed from the earth**, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you, and **you shall be a wanderer and a fugitive upon the earth**.' And Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment *is* greater than I can bear. Behold, **You have driven me out from the face of the earth today**, and I shall be hidden from Your face. And I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth, and it shall be *that* anyone who finds me shall kill me.' And the LORD said to him: 'Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.' And the LORD set a sign upon Cain so that anyone who found him should not kill him. And **Cain went out from the presence of the LORD** and lived in the land of Nod, to the east of Eden" (Gen. 4:3-16).

Again, God executed the curse of exile as punishment for sin. But unlike Adam and Eve, Cain apparently was completely cut off from any access to God. As these Scriptural examples show, the more grievously a person sins, the farther removed from God he or she becomes.

Noah's Generation Removed From the Earth

During the days of Noah, the human race so corrupted itself that God removed the entire population from the face of the earth. But because Noah served God and kept His commandments, he and his family were spared: "And the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. And the LORD repented that He had made man on the earth, and He *was* grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the crawling thing, and the fowl of the air; for I repent that I have made them.' But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:5-8).

All mankind became so degenerate and so evil that God decided to destroy all human flesh except Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives. Since the earth was filled with violence and corruption, there was no place to exile the wicked from the righteous, and there was no place for the righteous to live in peace. The entire civilization had to be destroyed:

"Now the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt—for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said to Noah,

'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And, behold, I will destroy them *with* the earth" (verses 11-12).

Before unleashing this worldwide destruction, God established a covenant with Noah and gave him instructions for building the ark: "Make an ark of cyprus timbers. You shall make rooms in the ark, and you shall pitch it inside and outside with pitch....**I will establish My covenant with you.**; And you shall come into the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives..." (verses 14, 18).

Because God covenanted with Noah, the human race was preserved through the Flood. After the Flood, the earth was repopulated by the children of Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Abraham, who lived ten generations after the Flood, was descended from Noah's oldest son Shem. Because Abraham served God and obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, God established His covenant with him, as He had with his righteous forefather Noah. This covenant was the foundation of the covenant that God established with the children of Israel, who were Abraham's descendants.

When God covenanted with Abraham, He revealed that his descendants would suffer grievous bondage, but that He would deliver them at the set time (Gen. 15:13-16). That promise was fulfilled in the days of Moses, as the book of Exodus records. The Scriptural account tells us that "**God remembered His covenant with Abraham**..." (Ex. 2:24).

God Always Fulfills His Covenants

God is faithful. When God promises to bless those who obey Him, He always fulfills His word. When He pronounces a curse on those who disobey, he always fulfills His word. GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS WORD.

The children of Israel ignored this lesson of Scripture. They forgot the examples of Adam and Eve, Cain, the generation of Noah's day, and other sinners of the past who had reaped the curses of God for their disobedience. As the book of Judges records, the children of Israel forsook God and fell into grievous idolatry soon after entering the Promised Land (Judg. 2:8-13). During the reigns of the kings, God sent many prophets to warn them of the judgment that would befall them if they did not turn from their idolatry and cease to practice their abominations.

The books of the prophets, which record these warnings to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, teach us another powerful lesson about the faithfulness and mercy of God. GOD ALWAYS ALLOWS TIME FOR REPENTANCE. That is why God did not execute the curse of exile upon the first generation of Israelites who broke His covenant by worshiping the false gods of the heathen. God withheld His judgment many times when the people repented. When they sinned, He sent drought and famine and enemy armies to plague them, in the hope that they would turn again to Him for deliverance. But after many generations, the land was filled with such corruption and abominable idolatry that God could no longer forbear.

The Ten Tribes of Israel Exiled to Assyria

The people of the northern kingdom of Israel were the first to go into captivity: "And they [the ten tribes of Israel] left all the commandments of the LORD their God and made molten images, two calves for themselves. And they made a grove, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire. And they used divination and sorceries, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel **and removed them out of His sight**; not one was left, only the tribe of Judah by itself" (II Kings 17:16-18).

The abominable practices that provoked God's judgment against Israel can be traced to Jeroboam, who was made king when the northern ten tribes rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam: "For He tore Israel from the house of David and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did. They did not depart from them until **the LORD removed Israel out of His sight** as He had said by all His servants the prophets. **So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria** *as it is* to this day" (II Kings 17:21-23).

God Warns the Kingdom of Judah

The southern kingdom of Judah was spared from God's judgment for a time. Under the direction of righteous King Josiah, the land had been purged from countless idols and high places that the people had used in their idolatrous worship. But the repentance of the people was short-lived. After Josiah's death, Judah again fell into total corruption. The people of Judah, including the priests and Levites, did worse than the people of Israel and sinned greatly against God. Although God sent many prophets to warn them, the people of Judah refused to listen or repent. God sent Jeremiah to give them one last warning:

"The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. It was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; the word which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the people of Jerusalem, saying, 'From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon the king of Judah, even to this day, that *is* the twenty-third year, the Word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you, speaking again and again. **But you have not hearkened**. And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, again and again and sending them again and again; **but you have not hearkened nor bowed down your ear to hear**. They *all* said, 'Turn again now, each one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and to your fathers forever and ever. And do not go after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no harm. Yet you have not hearkened to Me,' says the LORD, 'so that you might provoke Me with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.

"Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and will **bring them against this land, and against its people**, and against all these nations all around *you*. And I will completely destroy them, and make them a waste, and a hissing, and everlasting ruins....And this whole land shall be a desolation *and* an astonishment. And these nations shall **serve the king of Babylon seventy years**. And it shall be, when seventy years are fulfilled I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, and the land of the Chaldeans,' says the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and I will make it an everlasting desolation. And I will bring on that land all My words which I have spoken against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations" (Jer. 25:1-13).

Judah Goes into Babylonian Captivity

After announcing His judgment through Jeremiah, God did exactly as He had said. He raised up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and made Babylon the greatest kingdom of the Gentiles. With his armies, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and destroyed the land, leaving none of the inhabitants to dwell there: "The cities of the south have been shut up, and none shall open them; **Judah has been exiled**, all of it has **been wholly exiled**" (Jer. 13:19).

As Jeremiah had prophesied, the southern kingdom of Judah suffered the same judgment as the northern kingdom of Israel: "Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes which Israel made. And the **LORD rejected all the seed of Israel** [including the tribe of Judah], and afflicted them, and **delivered them into the hand of spoilers until He had cast them out of His sight**" (II Kings 17:19-20).

The Captives Understood That They Were Under the Curse of the Covenant

The people of Israel and Judah knew that God had sent them into captivity as punishment for their sins. They understood that because they had not kept the laws that God delivered to Moses, but had rejected them and rebelled against Him, all the curses that were written had come upon them. The prayer of Daniel, one of the captives of Judah, clearly points out why the final curse of the covenant—exile from the land—was executed against Israel and Judah:

"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, which came according to the Word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. And I set my face toward the LORD God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.

"And I prayed to the LORD my God and made my confession, and said, 'O LORD, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and mercy to those who love Him, and to those who keep His commandments, **we have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, and have turned aside from Your commandments and from Your ordinances.** Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our rulers, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

"O LORD, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us confusion of face, as at this day to **the men of Judah and to the people of Jerusalem, and to all Israel** who are near and who are afar off, **through all the countries where You have driven them because they dealt treacherously with You**. O LORD, confusion of face belongs to us, to our kings, to our rulers, and to our fathers, **because we have sinned against You**.

"To the LORD our God belong mercies and forgivenesses **even though we have rebelled against Him.** Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God to walk in His laws which He set before us by His servants the prophets. **Yea, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and have turned aside**, so that they might not obey Your voice. Therefore **the curse has been poured out upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him**. And He has confirmed His words which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us by bringing upon us a great evil, for under the whole heaven *it* has not been done as *it* has been done upon Jerusalem.

"As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil has come upon us. Yet we did not make our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. Therefore, the LORD did not hesitate concerning the evil that He brought upon us, for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all His works which He does, **but we did not obey His voice**. And now, O LORD our God, Who has brought Your people out from the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and has made a name for Yourself, as it is this day, **we have sinned, we have done wickedly!**

"O LORD, I pray You, according to all Your righteousness, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain. Because of our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those who are around us. And now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that *is* desolate for the LORD'S sake. O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name. For we do not present our supplications before You on account of our righteousnesses, but because of Your great mercies. **O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken and do. Do not delay,** for Your own sake, O my God; for Your city and Your people are called by Your name' " (Dan. 9:1-19).

What a heartfelt prayer to God! What a powerful admission of the sins and transgressions that Judah and all Israel had committed against

God! As a result of their wickedness, they had become a reproach to all the nations around, exactly as Moses had prophesied: "...even all the nations shall say, 'Why has the LORD done this to this land? *For* what *is the* meaning *of the* heat of this great anger?' Then *men* shall say, '**Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD** God of their fathers which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they did not know and that He had not allotted to them. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land to bring on it **all the curses that are written in this book. And the LORD rooted them out of their land** in anger and wrath, and in great indignation, and **cast them into another land**, as *it is* today' " (Deut. 29:24-28).

Even the heathen peoples of the world understood that the captivity of Israel and Judah was decreed by God. They knew that He had executed this great curse because His people had broken His covenant with them. Their exile from the land of the covenant was a sign to them and to all the world that God had rejected them. While in exile, **the people were not in covenant with God**.

The Exiles Could Not Keep the Passover

As Jeremiah had prophesied, the Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years. During this seventy-year captivity, the land was desolate, and Jerusalem and the temple were in ruins. Because the temple was destroyed, no sacrifices could be offered. Since the people were no longer in the land of Judea, they could not restore the temple and renew the covenant.

Moreover, during the entire seventy-year captivity, the Passover could not be kept. The word of God makes it absolutely clear that when the people were not in the land of Israel, they could not keep the Passover on the 14th day of the first month. Notice the instructions that God gave to Moses when the children of Israel were in the wilderness: "And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month between the two evenings [*ben ha arbayim*] in the wilderness of Sinai. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, the children of Israel did. And there were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day. And they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day.

"And those men said to him, 'We *are* defiled by the dead body of a man. Why are we kept back that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in its appointed time among the children of Israel?' And Moses said to them, 'You wait *here*, and I will hear what the LORD will command about you.'

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying, "If any man of you or of your generations shall be unclean because of a dead body, or in a journey afar off, he shall still keep the Passover to the LORD. They shall keep it the fourteenth day of the second month between the two evenings [*ben ha arbayim*], eating it [having returned to the

land of Israel] with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*. They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any bone of it. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it" (Num. 9:5-12).

God's instructions to Moses show that the people were not allowed to keep the Passover when they were away from the land of Israel. This prohibition applied to all those who were carried out of the land to captivity and exile. That the Jews in exile could not observe the Passover is acknowledged by the Karaite Jews and recorded by Samuel Al-Magribi in 1484: "Today, however, by reason of our many sins, we are scattered over the four corners of the earth, we are dispersed in the lands of the Gentiles, we are soiled with their ritual uncleanness and unable to reach the House of the Lord, and our **status is equivalent to that of persons ritually unclean or traveling far away. That is why this ordinance of the Passover sacrifice no longer applies to us**, and the reason for this is our fathers' exceeding disobedience to God and our own following in their sinful footsteps" (Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, p. 206)

When the Jews were in exile during the Babylonian captivity, they could not keep the Passover. This prohibition led to the replacement of the Passover with the Seder meal on the 15th day of the first month, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. To make their false substitute appear Scriptural, the Jews changed the name of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread to "Passover." By changing the name of this feast, the Seder meal on the night of the 15th became the "Passover" for those who were living in exile.

The Jews have always claimed Scriptural support for their humanly devised traditions. But as Jesus warned, these traditions of men are empty and vain, and have no value whatsoever in God's eyes. In fact, they are dangerous counterfeits that attempt to deceive and draw people away from the true commandments of God. The counterfeit Jewish 15th "Passover" has lured many Christians away from the commanded time for observing the Passover, which is the night of the 14th, the night that Jesus was betrayed.

A Remnant Returns to Renew the Covenant and Keep the Passover

At the end of the seventy years, God fulfilled His word through Jeremiah by bringing the Medes and Persians against Babylon. The exile of the Jews ended with the Medes and Persians in control of the empire. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, God gave the Jews grace and favor in the eyes of the king, who issued a decree that the temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt in order that sacrifices might again be offered to God. For this purpose, the king restored much of the temple treasure that Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from the house of God.

After Cyrus' decree was proclaimed throughout the empire, a contingent of 42,360 Jews, with 7,337 men and women servants and 200 singers, left their land of exile to return to Judea. They were led by Zerubbabel, who

was appointed governor of Judea, and Jeshua, who was high priest at that time (Ezra 1-3). This small remnant of Jews came back to the land of Judea and resettled the cities. By the beginning of the seventh month, they had built an altar and had reinstituted the sacrifices (Ezra 3:1-2, 6). They kept all of the feast days that God had appointed for the seventh month, including the Feast of Tabernacles (verses 4-5). At this time, they also made preparations for rebuilding the temple (verses 6-7). The foundation of the temple was laid in the second month of the following year (verses 8-13).

The Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity were back in the land of Israel and could again be in covenant with God. They were able to keep the Passover, unlike the Jews who were still living in exile. Those who remained in exile were prohibited from keeping the Passover, even after the sacrifices had been reinstituted in Jerusalem. Only by leaving their place of exile and returning to the land of Israel could they participate in the sacrifice of the Passover on the 14th day of the first month.

Although the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem and Judea undoubtedly observed the Passover each year, the book of Ezra records only the Passover that was kept in the year that the temple was completed. That Passover was especially significant because it marked the official renewal of the covenant by the returned exiles. Ezra relates the great joy of the former exiles at this Passover observance following the dedication of the house of God: "And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity kept the dedication of this house of God with joy....And the children of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month. The priests and the Levites *were* purified together, all of them pure. And they killed the Passover *lamb* for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel ate *the Passover lamb*, all who had come again out of exile, and all such as had separated themselves to them from the uncleanness of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel. And *they* kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful..." (Ezra 6:15-16, 19-22).

Ezra's Passover Law

As the account in the book of Ezra shows, the Levites themselves killed the Passover lambs at this observance. This was not a purely domestic observance, as was the Passover that the children of Israel observed in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and in their early years in the Promised Land. This Passover—the first recorded observance by the returned exiles—was centered at the newly dedicated temple and was kept according to the new Passover law that Ezra had instituted. Ezra's new law was enacted primarily because of the apostate Jewish temples in Samaria and Elephantine, where unauthorized sacrifices were being made. The new Passover law enforced the Scriptural teaching that Jerusalem was the only city where God had placed His name and that the altar at the temple in Jerusalem was the only authorized place to offer sacrifices to God. Since the Jews of Ezra's

day were accustomed to observing a temple-centered Passover, those who lived near the apostate temples in Samaria and Elephantine would naturally have been tempted to observe the Passover at these sites. The majority of the Jews still lived in exile, and less than 60,000 lived in Judea. By restricting all Passover observance to the area of Jerusalem, Ezra hoped to prevent the exiles from falling prey to the counterfeit religions that were competing with the true worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem.

Ezra was not without Scriptural authority when he issued his new Passover law. God's command to Moses in Numbers 9 prohibited the observance of the Passover in foreign lands. Likewise, Ezra's edict forbade the observance of the Passover by all Jews who had not returned from their land of exile. Only those Jews who returned to Judea could observe the Passover because they were no longer cut off from the covenant.

The new Passover law made it mandatory for those who were still living in exile to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to observe the Passover. Those exiles who were unwilling or unable to make the pilgrimage had a convenient substitute for the Passover—the Seder meal on the night of the 15th. This tradition grew to become the predominant practice among the Jews.

The observance of the Passover in Jerusalem and Judea ceased with the destruction of the temple in AD 70. From that time forward, the Jews were unable to observe the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. Although the domestic sacrifice was practiced by many Jews in succeeding generations, the token shank bone of the Seder meal eventually replaced the Passover lamb among most Jews in Judea, as well as those who lived in foreign lands.

The Jews today observe the 15th Seder as their Passover, and insist that the Passover has always been on the 15th. But our study of the Passover ordinances that God delivered to Moses shows that there is no truth in their claim. The Scriptural account in Exodus 12 bears record that the Passover in Egypt was kept on the night of the 14th, as were all domestic observances of the Passover by the children of Israel in Old Testament times.

In the next chapter, we will examine the records of Jewish historians concerning the Passover in New Testament times, which will show that the domestic Passover on the night of the 14th was still being observed.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LATER PASSOVER PRACTICES AS RECORDED BY JEWISH HISTORIANS

By restricting the Passover to Jerusalem and its environs, Ezra established a standard that became a permanent practice among the Jews. This restrictive measure, which was instituted to prevent idolatry, focused on Jerusalem and the temple of God as the center of the true worship of God under the Old Covenant. The book of Ezra records the first Passover to be observed after the dedication of the second temple. Although the Passover was centered at the temple, the lambs were slain at the beginning of the 14th and were eaten on the night of the 14th (Ezra 6:19-21).

In later temple-centered observances, the lambs were slain late on the 14th and were not eaten until the night of the 15th. Although the temple sacrifice in the afternoon of the 14th became a widespread tradition, it did not wholly replace the domestic sacrifice of the lambs at the beginning of the 14th. Some Jews continued to observe the domestic Passover as commanded in the Scriptures, and others kept the temple-centered Passover as sanctioned by the religious authorities. The records of Scripture and history show that the two practices existed side by side.

It is important to understand that Ezra's decree did not change the time for killing the Passover lambs. His Passover law did not in any way alter or contradict the Passover ordinances of God, as recorded in Scripture. The measures that Ezra enforced were aimed at protecting the true worship of God and upholding His laws—not changing or replacing them. His restriction of the Passover to the area of Jerusalem promoted a temple-centered observance, but it did not replace or prohibit the domestic killing of the Passover within that area.

In the previous chapter, we learned that Ezra's "new Passover law" was based on God's command in Numbers 9. As high priest, Ezra had full authority to interpret the Scriptural commands for observing the Passover. His Passover decree was accepted as a religious law for all Jews, as were the decisions of other high priests. This law was enforced by the Great Assembly, which was founded by Ezra and Nehemiah to oversee the religious practices of the people. As the leading authority in religious matters, the Great Assembly maintained unity and stability in the religion of the Jews for more than two centuries. However, the rule of the Great Assembly was undermined by the rise of Hellenism in the 300's BC.

Hellenism was introduced by the Greeks in the days of Alexander the Great. The Greeks actively promoted their Hellenistic beliefs in the lands that they dominated. The spread of Hellenism among the Jews was curbed for a time by the influence of Simon the Just, who was high priest in the last years of the Great Assembly. As the last of the Sopherim—the great teachers of the law—Simon was held in high esteem by all Jews. With his death, the rule of

the Great Assembly came to a close, and Hellenism became the dominant influence in the lives of the people. Its impact on the Jewish community led to major changes in the teachings of the religious leaders.

Dr. Lauterbach, a Jewish historian, describes the changes that occurred during this period: "Thus we see that after the death of Simon the Just, the conditions of the community and as a result thereof **the activities of the teachers differed greatly** from those that obtained in the times of the Soferim [the teachers of the Great Assembly]" (*Rabbinic Essays*, p. 200).

The priests and Levites were no longer teaching the laws of God that had been so diligently upheld and enforced by the Sopherim of the Great Assembly. Under the domination of Hellenism, the priesthood had lost its authority. In the religious confusion that followed, a great number of lay teachers arose: "But when the authority of the High-Priest as the ruler of the community was gone, and the priestly teachers also **lost their official authority**....Since there was **no official body of teachers** to decide authoritatively all religious matters, the pious [lay] man who cared for the Law had to be his own religious authority....These new [lay] teachers soon claimed for themselves the religious authority which was formerly the prerogative of the priests" (Ibid, pp. 198-199).

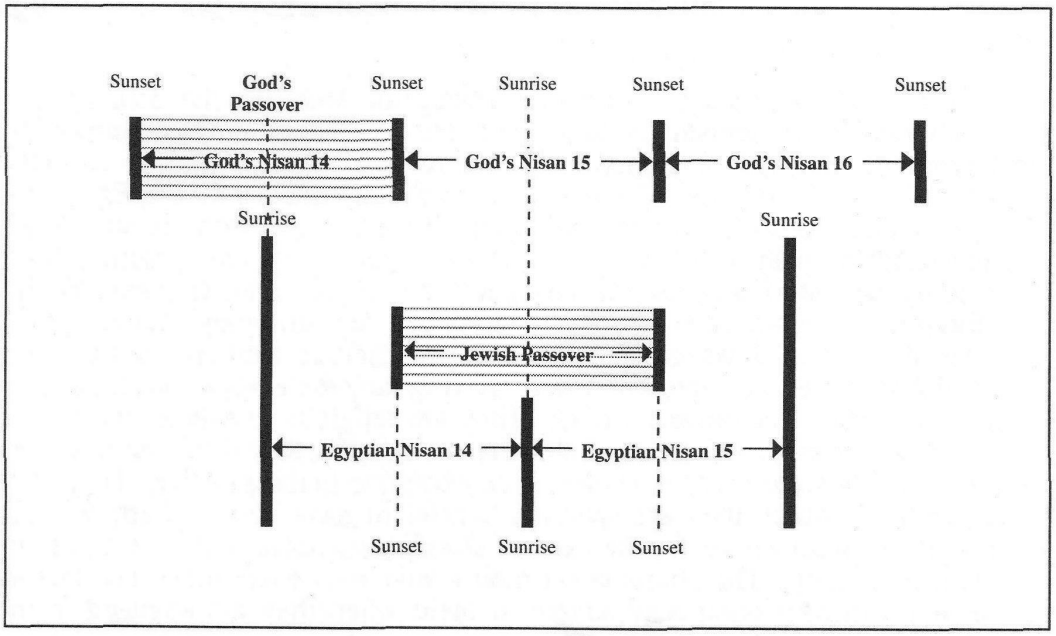
These self-styled teachers had not been trained in the Scriptures and did not know how to accurately interpret the wording in the Hebrew text. As a result, they introduced so many different interpretations of the Law that a state of anarchy developed in the religious life of the Jews: "There prevailed a state of religious anarchy, wherein **the practical life of the people was not controlled by the law of the fathers as interpreted by the religious authorities**, nor were the activities of the teachers carried on in an official way by an authoritative body. **This chaotic state of affairs lasted for a period of about eighty years**..." (Ibid. p. 200).

The religious chaos that prevailed among the Jews left the door open to major advances by Hellenism. At this time in history, Palestine was dominated by the Egyptians, who had developed their own form of Hellenism. For an entire century, 301 BC to 198 BC, Palestine was under the control of the Egyptians. Many Egyptian religious customs were adopted by the Jews and are still taught and practiced in Judaism today. Some of these pagan religious practices were recorded by the historian Herodotus during a visit to Egypt in the fifth century BC. The Egyptian customs that Herodotus describes are strikingly similar to the practices of Orthodox Jews today. These practices include drinking from pots and pans which have been scoured every day, shaving the whole body, and religiously bathing twice daily. Herodotus writes, "They are religious to excess, far beyond any other race of men, and use the following ceremonies: they drink out of brazen cups, which they scour every day: there is no exception to this practice. They wear linen garments, which they are specially careful to have always fresh washed. They practice circumcision for the sake of cleanliness, considering it better to be cleanly than comely. The priests shave their whole body every other day, that no lice or other impure thing may adhere to them when they are engaged in the service of the gods....They bathe twice every

day in cold water, and twice each night; besides they observe, so to speak, thousands of ceremonies" (Book II, pp. 37-41). The Egyptians had a countless number of such practices. Many of these practices became part of Judaism and were carried down to the time of Jesus Christ. He strongly condemned these self-righteous rituals as vain traditions of men (Mark 7:1-9).

Among the religious practices that the Jews adopted during the Egyptian domination was a change in the timing of the Passover observance. This change was introduced because the Egyptian calendar, which is based strictly on the solar cycle, begins the day with sunrise—unlike the Hebrew calendar, which begins the day at sunset. In addition, the months of the Hebrew calendar are regulated by the lunar cycle and may vary in number, whereas the Egyptian months are fixed divisions in the solar year: "The substitution of solar for lunar months was the earliest change in the Egyptian year....The day was divided into twelve and the night into as many hours. The first hour of the day commenced with the dawn, so that the hours could not originally have been of equal length; at the Ptolemaic period the hour was subdivided into minutes and seconds" (Wilkinson, *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. II, p. 368).

Although the Jews retained the lunar calendar, they embraced the Egyptian method of reckoning the day from sunrise to sunrise, instead of the Scriptural method of reckoning the day from sunset to sunset. Solomon Zeitlin acknowledges that the Jews have not been consistent in their method of calculating the day: "To ascertain when the Jewish day began we must clear up various matters about the Jewish calendar. If the calendar were solar [as it was during the Egyptian domination], the day began with dawn; the year began with the spring or after the winter equinox. If the calendar was lunar, the day began either when the sun set or when the stars became visible" (*The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1946, pp. 403-404).



For those Jews who reckoned the day from sunrise to sunrise, the 14th day of the first month began twelve hours later than by Scriptural reckoning. The Jews who kept the Passover at this later time were actually observing the 15th, according to Scriptural reckoning, although it was designated as the 14th day of the month by Egyptian reckoning. After the Egyptian domination ended, the Jews went back to reckoning the day from sunset to sunset, but the influence of the Egyptian practice had a lasting effect by contributing to the development of a 15th Passover.

By this period of history, the worship of the Jews had become so polluted with pagan teachings and practices that God allowed the desecration of the temple and its altar by Antiochus Epiphanes. In 169-168 BC, he plundered and ransacked the temple, offered swine on the altar of God, and poured swine's blood in the holy place. This desecration is known among the Jews as an abomination that desolated the temple.

After this historic desecration, the temple was not restored for three and a half years. Because no temple sacrifices could be offered during this time, the Passover could only be kept as a domestic observance. All Jews who desired to keep the Passover were obliged to kill their own lambs at home, as commanded by God in Exodus 12. The Jews of that time were well acquainted with God's commands for the Passover. The official, authorized Scriptures were available in every synagogue for every Jew to read and verify the commands for the domestic sacrifice of the Passover. For those Jews who desired to obey God, the only Passover that could be observed was the domestic Passover, since the temple was not in service for any sacrificing. Even after the restoration of the temple, the domestic Passover remained the predominant observance. Historical information provided by Philo indicates that it was more widely observed among the Jews in New Testament times than was the temple sacrifice of the Passover.

Philo Records Domestic Observance of Passover

Philo was a Jewish philosopher who wrote at the time of the compilation of the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke. His writings describe the Passover as observed in New Testament times. Here is what he records: "...the day called by the Hebrews in their own tongue, the Pasch [Passover], on the which the **whole people sacrifice, every member of them, WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE PRIESTS**, because the law has granted to the whole nation for one special day in every year the right of priesthood and of performing the sacrifice themselves" (Philo, *De Decalogue*, p. 159, emphasis added).

This historical record confirms that the Jews of New Testament times were still practicing the domestic Passover, as commanded in the ordinances that God delivered to Moses. In another book, Philo records the following about the Jews' observance of the Passover: "After the New Moon comes the fourth feast called the crossing-feast, which the Hebrews in their native tongue call Pascha [Passover]. In this festival many myriads of victims are offered—**by the whole people**, old and young alike, raised for that particular

day to the dignity of the priesthood. For at other times the priests according to the ordinance of the law carry out both the public sacrifices (evening and morning) and those offered by private individuals. But on this occasion the whole nation performs the sacred rites and acts as priest..." (Philo, *De Spec.*, Leg. II, p. 146, emphasis added).

Ignoring the evidence of history, some claim that there was no domestic observance of the Passover in New Testament times. But Philo could not have described the domestic observance of the Passover if he had not seen it being practiced by the Jews of his day. His graphic eyewitness account of the Jews' practice shows that the Passover lambs were being killed by the people and not by the priests.

Philo's records give us firm historical evidence that at the time of Jesus, and shortly after, there was widespread observance of the domestic Passover. Furthermore, the lack of any reference by Philo to the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs indicates that the domestic sacrifice was the predominant practice. As we will see, the temple sacrifice of the Passover was practiced by only a small minority of Jews in New Testament times. Because of the vast number of lambs required for the Passover in Jesus' day, it was not possible for the priests at the temple to kill all the lambs during the allotted time. It was therefore necessary for most of the lambs to be killed at houses and inns in Jerusalem and in neighboring cities within the greater festival area. Joachim Jeremias explains why the Passover observance was extended to the area surrounding Jerusalem:

"...It is highly improbable that the huge crowds drawn into Jerusalem by the feasts could all find rooms inside the city walls. Some might stay in nearby places like Bethphage or Bethany, where Jesus found shelter during his last stay in Jerusalem....**The majority of pilgrims, however, had to have tents in the immediate neighbourhood of the city**, since at Passover time it was still very cold at night and there could be no question of sleeping out in the open. Actually we have evidence of Festival pilgrims camping out at night....However, the participants in the Passover feast were obliged to spend the Passover night (14-15 Nisan) [which was actually "the night to be much observed"—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] in Jerusalem. The city itself could not take the crowd of pilgrims, and **so that they could fulfill the law the boundaries of Jerusalem were extended to take in even Bethphage** (M. Men. xi.2)" (*Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*, p. 61, emphasis added).

Although the domestic Passover was the prevailing practice in New Testament times, the temple sacrifice of the Passover was firmly established among the Pharisaic Jews. The Pharisees observed a 14/15 Passover, taking their lambs to the temple to be sacrificed on the afternoon of the 14th and eating their Passover meal on the 15th. The temple sacrifice of the Passover, as observed by the Pharisaic Jews, later became an official tradition of Judaism. This tradition was practiced until the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

Some claim that Jesus and His disciples conformed to the traditional temple sacrifice of the Passover. But the New Testament records that Jesus kept the Passover the night before the traditional temple observance. The Gospel accounts of His last Passover make it abundantly clear that it was a domestic observance on the night of the 14th. The disciples Peter and John were commanded by Jesus to prepare a Passover lamb that was killed at the house, or inn, where they kept the Passover (Luke 22:8). Based on the Gospel records, we can conclude that the domestic sacrifice of the Passover and the temple sacrifice of the Passover were existing side by side.

Josephus Documents Change in the Meaning of "Passover"

The temple-centered 14/15 Passover was substantially different from the domestic 14th Passover, both in the manner of observance and in the meaning of the day. To justify the temple sacrifice of the Passover, a new interpretation was applied to the ordinances of God. God's commands **to keep** the Passover on the 14th were misinterpreted to mean that only the killing of the lambs was required to be done on the 14th, and the time of the sacrifice was changed from the beginning of the 14th to the afternoon of the 14th. The effect of killing the lambs at the temple on the afternoon of the 14th was to move the Passover meal from the night of the 14th to the night of the 15th. For Jews who observed the traditional temple-centered Passover, keeping the Passover on the 14th meant nothing more than killing the lambs at the temple. They did not complete their observance on the Passover day because the lambs were not roasted and eaten until the night of the 15th.

The temple sacrifice of the Passover ended when the temple was destroyed in AD 70. Recognition of the 14th day as the day that God had ordained for the Passover was essentially eliminated from Jewish practice. The sacrifice of the Passover lambs was officially replaced by the 15th Jewish Seder meal. Since the Seder meal was called the Passover but was eaten on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the separate meaning of the two days and the two feasts was lost.

The transition to a single observance is documented by Josephus' contrasting descriptions of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In these accounts, Josephus shows that there was a change from the separate designation of the two feasts, which originally totaled eight days. His narration is most revealing: "...But when the fourteenth day was come, and all were ready to depart, they offered the sacrifice, and purified their houses with the blood, using a bunch of hyssop for that purpose; and when they had supped, they burnt the remainder of the flesh, as just ready to depart. Whence it is that **we do still offer this sacrifice in like manner to this day**, and call this festival Pascha, which signifies the feast of the passover, because on **that day God passed us over**, and sent the plague upon the Egyptians; for the destruction of the first-born came upon the Egyptians that night..." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 11, Ch. XIV, Sec. 6, emphasis added).

In this narration of Exodus 12, Josephus clearly depicts the Passover as commemorating the event of God's passing over the houses of the

children of Israel in Egypt, and he calls this commemorative observance the festival of "Pascha," or Passover. He does not call the Feast of Unleavened Bread the "Passover" at this point. In the next section of his exposition, after his narration of the Exodus itself, we find this statement about the entire eight days: "Whence it is that, in memory of the want we were in, **we keep a feast for eight days**, which is called **the feast of unleavened bread**" (Ibid., Ch. XV, Sec. 1, emphasis added). Here he includes the Passover day with the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, making a total of eight days.

These two accounts by Josephus show that the terms "Passover" and "Feast of Unleavened Bread" were beginning to be used interchangeably, although the two observances were entirely different in their meaning. Josephus' accounts show that the original distinction between the two feasts was beginning to be blurred. The following narration reflects the change in the usage and meaning of the term "Passover": "Now, upon the approach of that **feast of unleavened bread**, which the law of their fathers had appointed for the Jews at this time, **which feast is called Passover**, and is a **memorial of their deliverance** out of Egypt..." (Ibid., Bk. XVII, Ch. IX, Sec. 3, emphasis added).

Recounting the same event in *Wars of The Jews*, Josephus again records the change in terminology: "And indeed, at **the feast of unleavened bread**, which was now at hand, and is **called by the Jews the Passover**..." (Bk. II, Ch. I, Sec. 3, emphasis added).

Josephus' writings clearly show that the Jews had renamed the Feast of Unleavened Bread "**the Passover**." This was common terminology in Josephus' day. The meaning of the name had shifted from God's "passing over" the children of Israel on the night of the 14th to their Exodus from Egypt on the night of the 15th. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was probably first called Passover in the days of Josiah (II Chron. 35:7-9). Ezra, who recorded this terminology in II Chronicles 35, also edited Deuteronomy 16 to reflect this same usage.

Although the Jews of Ezra's time used this terminology, they recognized and observed the 14th as the day that God had ordained for the Passover. However, this knowledge was lost to later generations of Jews, who observed only a seven-day festival. In the Mishnah—rabbinical writings which were compiled by the third century AD—we find a seven-day Passover observance codified. Its acceptance as a law of Judaism is justified by reinterpreting the meaning of the command in Deuteronomy 16:3: "...seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread **therewith**..." (*JPSA*).

As we learned in Chapter Fourteen of this book, the word "**with it**" in this verse is referring to the sacrifices of the flock and of the herd, which are described in Verse 2. These sacrifices, which were offered during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, were originally called peace offerings (II Chron. 30:21-22, 24). Verse 3 adds to the command in Verse 2 by stating that with those sacrifices, which were renamed "passover-offerings," the children of

Israel were to eat unleavened bread **for seven days**. These verses are referring only to the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Ignoring the true meaning of these verses, the writers of the *Mishnah* have perpetuated the Jewish misinterpretion of Deuteronomy 16:3 as referring to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb: "What is the difference between the Passover offering in Egypt and the Passover offering of succeeding generations? The Passover offering in Egypt had to be acquired on the tenth and required the sprinkling with a bunch of hyssop upon the lintel and upon the two door-posts and was eaten in haste during one night, **but the Passover of all succeeding generations had to be observed throughout seven days**" (Pes. 9:5, emphasis added).

As the writers of the *Mishnah* expressly state, the traditional Passover of the Jews does not conform to the Passover ordinances that God delivered to Moses. In fact, this tradition of Judaism rejects the commandments of God, even as Jesus said (Mark 7:9).

Records of the Passover Sacrifice at the Temple

After the destruction of the temple in AD 70, there was great danger that all knowledge of the sacrifices and ritual services of the temple might be lost. When it became obvious that the Jews would not be able to rebuild the temple in the foreseeable future, the leading rabbis began to record the details of the temple and its services. Their writings, which were codified and preserved in the *Mishnah*, are the only descriptions we have of the services that were performed by the priests at the temple. Much of this information had been handed down orally and was reconstructed from memory.

The *Mishnah* gives a detailed account of the temple sacrifice of the Passover. These records show the enormity of the task that the priests were required to perform. Most people today have no knowledge at all of what is involved in slaughtering great numbers of animals. Today, nearly all of us go to a supermarket where we buy our meat neatly cut and packaged, ready to take home and prepare. Because our modern society has left us totally lacking in the knowledge of animal slaughter, the records in the *Mishnah* can help us understand how the slaughtering of thousands of Passover lambs was accomplished.

The *Mishnah* also provides insight into the schedule for killing the Passover lambs at the temple. In the traditional Jewish Passover, the lambs were sacrificed during the afternoon hours of the 14th day of the first month. However, the sacrificing of the lambs did not always begin at the same hour of the day. If the Passover day fell on the sixth day of the week, the sacrificing of the lambs began one hour earlier in order to be completed before the Sabbath. Although the time to begin sacrificing the Passover lambs could vary, it always followed the daily burnt-offering: "The daily burnt-offering was slaughtered at the eighth hour and a half and offered up at the ninth hour and a half; but on the eve of Passover it was slaughtered at the seventh hour and a half and offered up at the eighth hour and a half, whether

on a weekday or on the Sabbath. When the eve of Passover fell on the eve of the Sabbath, it was slaughtered at the sixth hour and a half and offered up at the seventh hour and a half, and the Passover sacrifice after it" (Pes. 5:1).

The following record in the *Mishnah* shows the Jewish interpretation of the Passover commands in Exodus 12. In the traditional Jewish Passover, the slaughtering of the lambs was carried out by three successive courses of men. This traditional practice replaced the commanded slaughter of the lambs by the whole congregation of the children of Israel after assembling by families at their individual homes. To justify their traditional practice, the rabbis applied their own interpretation to key words in the Scriptural command. While the Scriptural command in the Pentateuch remained the same, its meaning was changed from the original intent of God into a totally different interpretation. That is how non-Scriptural Jewish traditions have been made to sound Scriptural, when in fact they are not! Notice how subtly this Jewish misinterpretation of Scripture is presented in the following record from the *Mishnah*: "The Paschal lamb was slain in three parties, as Scripture says, And all the **assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slay it—assembly** (and) **congregation**, and **Israel**. [This statement shows how the Passover ordinance was misinterpreted to fit Jewish tradition; the command in Exodus 12:6 that all Israel kill the lambs at the same time was transformed and made to fit the three courses for sacrificing the paschal lamb at the temple.] When the first group [**assembly**] had entered the forecourt was filled; they closed the doors of the forecourt; they sounded the [sustained quavering sound]; the priests stood row upon row and in their hands were dishes [bowls] of silver and dishes [bowls] of gold; the whole of one row had silver ones, and all in the other had golden ones; they were not mingled; and the basins had no rims lest they set them down and the blood congealed" (Ibid., 5:5, emphasis added).

In the following description from the *Mishnah*, notice that God's command for the head of the household to slay the lamb at home has been altered to fit the temple sacrifice of the lambs: "An Israelite might slay it [footnote: "A layman or non-priest, was allowed, if he desired the honour, to perform the slaughtering in the case of all sacrifices."]; and the priest received it [the blood] and handed it on to his fellow [priest] and this one to his next fellow [priest]. He took hold of the full one [bowl of blood] and returned the empty one. The priest nearest to the Altar sprinkled [tossed or slung the blood] in one act against the base" (Ibid., 5:6).

Although three courses were allotted for the temple sacrifice of the Passover, the number of the lambs slain in the last course was generally smaller: "When the first group [**assembly**] went out, the second group [**congregation**] came in. When the second [**congregation**] left, the third [**Israel**] entered. Just as the first had done, so did the second and third. They [the Levitical singers] recited the Hallel [footnote: "Psalms 113-118 thus designated were sung while the slaughtering was proceeding, and it was repeated if the animals were many and much time was taken up."]; if they finished it they repeated it, and if the repetition were completed they recited it a third time, although it never occurred in their days to have had to recite

it a third time [we are not told how long each recitation took]. R. Judah says, It never happened **even when the third group went in** that they ever reached as far as *I love the Eternal for He heareth* [Psa. 116:1] because **its number was few**" (Ibid., 5:7, emphasis added).

This record shows that the number of lambs killed in the third course was below the maximum that could have been sacrificed. In some years, the number of lambs was so small that the third course was not needed, and only the first and second courses entered the area where the lambs were slaughtered. In other years, the third course went in, but only for a short time because most of the lambs had been sacrificed in the first two courses. Later, we will see reliable estimates of the number of men and priests that could assemble in the Court of the Men of Israel, the area at the temple where the lambs were slaughtered.

In his book *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services, as They Were in the Time of Christ*, Alfred Edersheim gives the following account of the sacrifice of the Passover: "On the occasion to which we refer the evening sacrifice had been slain at 1:30, and offered at 2:30. But before the incense was burned or the lamps were trimmed, the Paschal sacrifice had to be offered. It was done on this wise: The first of the three festive divisions, with their Paschal lambs, was admitted within the Court of the Priests. Each division must consist of not less than thirty persons (3 X 10, the symbolical number of the Divine and of completeness). Immediately the massive gates were closed behind them. The priests drew a threefold blast from their silver trumpets when the Passover was slain. Altogether the scene was most impressive. All along the Court up to the altar of burnt-offering priests stood in two rows, the one holding golden, the other silver bowls. In these the blood of the Paschal lambs, which each Israelite slew for himself (as representative of his company at the Paschal Supper), was caught up by a priest, who handed it to his colleague, receiving back an empty bowl, and so the bowls with the blood were passed up to the priest at the altar, who jerked it in one jet at the base of the altar. While this was going on, a most solemn 'hymn' of praise was raised, the Levites leading in song, and the offerers either repeating after them or merely responding. Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people, while each of the others they responded by 'Hallelujah,' or 'Praise ye the Lord.' This service of song consisted of the so-called 'Hallel,' which comprised Psalms cxiii to cxviii" (page 223).

The *Mishnah* adds these details about the slaughtering of the lambs: "How did they suspend and flay [them]? Hooks of iron were fixed into the walls and into the pillars on which they were hung and flayed [after their throats had been cut and the blood caught in the silver or gold bowls to be splashed at the base of the altar]. And for whomsoever there was no place for suspending and flaying there were thin smooth staves which he placed on his shoulder and upon the shoulder of his fellow and so hung it up and flayed it. R. [Rabbi] Eliezer says, If the fourteenth happened to fall on the Sabbath he placed his hand on his fellow's shoulder and the hand of his fellow rested upon his shoulder and thus suspended it and flayed it" (Pes. 5:9).

The *Mishnah* records that after all the lambs had been sacrificed, the three courses remained in the temple area until the beginning of the 15th: "One rent it [cut open the lamb's belly] and took out its fat; he put it on a tray and offered it upon the Altar. The first group went out and stayed on the Temple Mount, the second party in the fortification, and the third lot remained in its place. When it became dark they went forth and roasted their Passover offerings" (Ibid., 5:10).

Nowhere in the Old Testament are there any instructions for the killing of the Passover lambs to justify these practices that are recorded in the *Mishnah*. They cannot be justified because God never commanded those practices! Nowhere in Scripture can we find any command from God to kill the Passover lambs at the temple, to splash the blood of the Passover lambs at the base of the altar, or to burn the fat of the Passover lambs on the altar. These practices do not conform to the Passover ordinances that God delivered to Moses.

Only in the manner of roasting the lambs did the traditional Jewish Passover conform to God's commands. It is curious that the Jews would choose to follow this particular ordinance while ignoring the other ordinances that are commanded by God in Exodus 12. The following description in the *Mishnah* is in accord with the Scriptural instructions for roasting the Passover lambs by fire: "How do they roast the Passover offering?—they bring a spit of pomegranate-wood, thrust it through its mouth to its buttocks, and place its knees, and its entrails [the edible parts—not the intestines] inside it. This is the opinion of R. Jose the Galilean. R. Akiba says, this would be a form of cooking; rather they [the legs] hang outside it.

"They may not roast the Passover offering on a skewer of metal or on a grating. R. Zadok said, It once happened that Rabban Gamliel said to Tabi his slave, 'Go forth and roast for us the Passover offering upon the grating.' If it touched the earthenware of the oven, he must pare away that part. If any of its juice dripped down on the earthenware and it came back upon it [the lamb], he must remove that part..." (Ibid., 7:1-2).

These rabbinical teachings show that the Jews understood that God had forbidden any method of roasting the Passover lambs which allowed juices to soften the meat. No liquid of any kind was permitted to touch the lamb. No portion of it could be steamed, simmered or boiled. The fact that the rabbis acknowledged and observed this Passover ordinance confirms that the "passover-offering" described in Deuteronomy 16, which was boiled, was not the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. The offerings that are referred to as the "**passover-offering**" in Deuteronomy 16 were **peace offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread** (II Chron. 30, 35). **Boiling the Passover lamb was ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN**.

Joachim Jeremias' Calculations of the Number of Passover Lambs Sacrificed Yearly at the Temple

The number of Passover lambs that were slain at the temple each year has been reliably estimated by Joachim Jeremias in his book *Jerusalem*

in the Times of Jesus. However, because he assumes that there was no domestic observance of the Passover, he incorrectly presents his calculations as the total number of Passover lambs that were slain. Since the size of the sacrificial area at the temple limited the number of lambs that could be slain during the three courses, Jeremias' estimation of the number of Passover participants in Jerusalem is far below the numbers recorded by Josephus, Tacitus and others.

Although Jeremias has erred in calculating the number of people who kept the Passover at that time, he does give an accurate estimation of the maximum number of Passover lambs that could have been slain at the temple. In his book, he relates the mathematical facts on which his estimate is based: "Since we know the dimensions of the Temple from M. [Mishnah] Middoth and from Josephus, we can calculate the approximate measurements of the space available for the three groups, and from that make a deduction of the numbers of pilgrims at the feast**....How much space did a group occupy when slaughtering the sacrifice?**" (*Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*, p. 79, emphasis added).

After citing the measurements of the temple area where the Passover lambs were slain, he concludes the following: "Since the actual slaughtering was in the place of slaughter, and the priests who stood in lines naturally claimed some of the space in the inner court, we could deduct approximately one-fifth of the available space for this, and the result is the same as our calculations. One group took up about 3,900 sq. yards when they were ***not*** slaughtering.

"How many men would this space hold? The people were closely packed. It is the eighth of the ten wonders of the Holy Place that there was enough room for them all. (M. AB. V.5). However, things did not always go as well as that: in b. Pes. 64b we read that, 'The Rabbis taught: No man was ever crushed in the Temple court except on one Passover in the days of Hillel, when an old man was crushed, and they called it "The Passover of the Crushed." ' Josephus also knows about such crowded conditions. At one Passover between AD 48 and 52 on the fourth day, not the Day itself, there was a panic in the Temple area and 30,000 people were crushed to death according to *BJ* 2.227. In such a restricted space we must reckon two men to a sq. m. [meter], each with one, or very occasionally with two (M. Pes. viii.2), animals for sacrifice; that is, about 6,400 men, which means about 6,400 animals for each group. This agrees with Josephus' account of the Passover of 4 BC, according to which the troops of Archelaus killed 3,000 people while they were sacrificing (*BJ* 2.12f; *Ant*. 17.218), while the rest escaped.

"There were three groups, of which the last was not as large as the other two, since everyone naturally tried to get in the earlier groups....**In this way we arrive at a figure of 18,000 passover victims**" (Ibid., p. 82, emphasis added).

Jeremias arrived at this figure by allowing the full capacity of 6,400 for the first two courses and a reduced number of 5,200 men for the third

course, which historically was smaller. If the third course had been filled to the maximum capacity, an estimated total of 19,200 Passover lambs could have been slain at the temple each year.

Jeremias' detailed calculations are found on pages 79-83 of his book. Here is part of a note which he added to an edition published in 1966 in reference to these calculations: "As regards the number of festival pilgrims, the calculations described on pp. 79-83, based on the space available for the worshippers at the Passover, are probably quite right, but I now ask myself whether it should be assumed that the entire inner forecourt, including the space at the sides and back of the Temple building, was thickly packed with worshippers (though we cannot imagine the throng of men with their sacrificial animals on their shoulders, described on p. 82). As a consequence, is the figure of 6,400 for each of the three groups, and therefore the total of 180,000 participants including the population of Jerusalem [estimating ten people per lamb], fixed a little too high? However, there can be no doubt that the influx of pilgrims at Passover time from all over the world was immense, and amounted to several times the population of Jerusalem" (Ibid., p. 84).

Jeremias' estimate that 18,000 Passover lambs were slain at the temple is reasonably accurate, but he erred in using this figure as a basis for determining the total number of Passover participants. Assuming that all the Passover lambs were slain at the temple, he allowed ten persons per lamb. The resulting figure of 180,000 participants in the Passover does not include the large number of people in Jerusalem who were observing the domestic Passover on the 14th, according to God's instructions in Exodus 12.

While scholars disagree as to the number of people who observed the Passover in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple in AD 70, most sources give figures in the range of Josephus' estimate. Josephus places the number of people at approximately 2,700,000, as opposed to Jeremias' extremely low estimate of only 180,000. Remember that Jeremias based his estimate on the assumption that all Passover lambs were killed at the temple, and that the domestic sacrifice of the Passover was no longer practiced. This false belief can easily be disproved by examining Josephus' account of the last great Passover of the Jews before the destruction of the temple. The huge number of Passover lambs that Josephus records for this observance makes it obvious that a majority of the Jews were still practicing the domestic sacrifice of the Passover.

Josephus' Account of the Last Passover at the Temple

In his account, Josephus records the total number of lambs that were sacrificed for the Passover in AD 70: "So these high priests, upon the coming of that feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour till the eleventh, but so that a company not less than ten belong to every sacrifice...found the number of sacrifices was two hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred; which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to two million seven hundred thousand

and two hundred persons that were holy and pure..." (*Wars of the Jews*, Bk. VI, Ch. IX, Sec. 3).

Josephus states that 256,500 lambs were killed for the Passover that year. **To kill 256,500 Passover lambs at the temple, 85,500 lambs would have to be slain in each of the three courses**. But the size of the sacrifical area limited the number of lambs in each course to less than 6,500. The number of lambs that Josephus records is **thirteen times the maximum number that could have been killed in the three courses**.

Some believe that Josephus has exaggerated the number of Passover lambs that were slain in AD 70. If we cut Josephus' figures in half and estimate that only 128,250 lambs were killed, we are still confronted with the fact that this huge number of Passover lambs could not possibly have been sacrificed at the temple during the three courses. With the three courses filled to maximum capacity, it would have taken SEVEN DAYS to kill even **half** the number of lambs that Josephus records. On the other hand, if the number of lambs recorded by Josephus is correct, it would have taken TWO WEEKS to kill all the lambs. These mathematical facts show how absurd it is to claim that all Passover lambs were slain at the temple! **In the time it would have taken to kill all those lambs, the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread would have been past! The Jews would have been eating the Passover lambs *after* the Feast of Unleavened Bread, instead of beforehand, as God had commanded!**

WE CAN CONCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: Far more lambs were sacrificed for the Passover than could possibly have been slain at the temple during the allotted courses. The only logical explanation is that **most of the lambs were not slain at the temple!**

This mathematical dilemma is resolved when we accept the fact that a majority of the Jews in the first century killed their own Passover lambs. **Since the maximum number of lambs that could be slain at the temple was less than 20,000, there is no way to account for the tens of thousands of additional lambs that were slain unless we acknowledge that the domestic Passover was the predominant practice. This is the only explanation that fits the Scriptural and historical facts.**

Contrary to what some have claimed, the domestic Passover continued as the predominant practice down to New Testament times. In the following chapter, we will see that the Gospel accounts of Jesus' last Passover confirm the observance of the domestic Passover by the Jews of that day.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SURVEY OF THE PASSOVER AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IN THE GOSPELS

The Scriptural and historical evidence that is presented in the preceding chapters of this book has enabled us to thoroughly study the Passover as observed by the children of Israel in Egypt, and as later observed by the Jews in the days of the kings and after the return from captivity. As we have seen, the Passover of King Hezekiah is the first Scriptural record of a temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs, in which the lambs were apparently killed in the afternoon of the 14th day. During the reign of King Josiah, the great-grandson of Hezekiah, the temple sacrifice of the Passover was reinstituted. Josiah's Passover was proclaimed by Ezra, the writer of II Chronicles, as the greatest and most unique Passover in the history of Israel, aside from the Passover in Egypt. Both Hezekiah's and Josiah's temple-centered Passover observances were the result of a personal commitment by these kings to restore apostate Israel and Judah to the true worship of God. After the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, Ezra promulgated the "new Passover law," which designated Jerusalem and the surrounding festival area as the only place where the Passover could be observed, whether as a temple sacrifice or a domestic sacrifice. Although the temple Passover later became an official tradition, it is evident in the historical accounts of Philo and Josephus that the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs continued side by side with the temple sacrifice as an accepted practice. Thus the foundation was laid for the 14/15 Passover dispute.

When we examine the Gospel accounts of Jesus' last Passover, it is evident that Jesus and His disciples kept a domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th, according to the commands of God in Exodus 12. On the other hand, the New Testament discloses that the Sadducees, scribes and Pharisees observed a 14/15 temple Passover, eating their Passover on the night of the 15th. This dichotomy makes it clear that the 14/15 controversy existed in New Testament times. We will have a better basis for understanding the observance of the Passover in the New Testament if we survey the terminology that is used in the Gospel accounts.

In Gospel references to the observance of the Passover, we find the same terminology that is recorded by Josephus, who stated that in his day the Passover and the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread were together called "Passover." Because this terminology was commonly used in the first century, Luke makes this clarifying statement: "Now the feast of unleavened *bread*, **which *is* called Passover, was approaching**" (Luke 22:1). This verse in the Gospel of Luke introduces the events leading up to Jesus' last Passover, which is described in Verses 7-38. Luke was inspired to record that **the Feast of Unleavened Bread was called "Passover**" in order to differentiate this feast from the Passover day. As we will see, this distinction is extremely important.

The Gospel of Mark also differentiates the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "Now after two days was the Passover and the *feast of* unleavened bread..." (Mark 14:1). The italicized words "*feast of*" are not in the Greek text but have been added to clarify the meaning of the text. In some passages, the use of additional words may lead to confusion by clouding the meaning of the text, making the passage more difficult to understand. However, in Mark 14:1, the insertion of the words "*feast of*" before "unleavened bread" serves to clarify the meaning of Mark's statement.

Both Mark and Luke make a clear distinction between the Passover day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in their accounts of the events leading to Jesus' last Passover. On the other hand, in his narration of the early life of Jesus Christ, Luke includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the Passover day as a single feast called "the feast of Passover." In this passage, Luke does not distinguish the Passover day from the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but records that Jesus and "... His parents went to Jerusalem every year **at the feast of the Passover....[And] they departed after completing the days**..." (Luke 2:41, 43).

The fact that Luke did not write "...after completing **the day**" reveals that he was not referring to the Passover day only. His use of the plural word "**days**" shows that he was referring to the entire eight-day festival, which included both the Passover day and the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The terminology in Luke's Gospel has little meaning for those who do not observe the Christian Passover on the night of the 14th—which was the night of Jesus' betrayal. However, for those who seek to keep the New Testament ceremony as Jesus commanded, the distinction between the Passover day and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is of vital importance. Without an understanding of this distinction, the arguments that have been raised in the 14/15 Passover controversy can be quite confusing and extremely difficult to resolve.

Jesus Did Not Keep the Traditional Jewish Passover

Some advocates of a 15th Passover point to Luke 2:41 as proof that Jesus kept the traditional Jewish Passover, with a lamb that was sacrificed on the afternoon of the 14th and eaten on the 15th. However, this verse in Luke's Gospel does not designate the time that the lamb was sacrificed or the day that Jesus ate the Passover. It simply states that Jesus went with His parents to Jerusalem each year at "the feast of the Passover." In Luke's day, this was common terminology for the eight-day festival observance that began on the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month, and continued through the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, from the 15th through the 21st. Since this festival included both the 14th and the 15th, and no details are given in Luke 2:41 as to which day Jesus kept the Passover, it is groundless to claim that this text supports a 15th Passover.

The terminology that Luke uses in this verse shows that Jesus kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread every year, as the Scriptures command (Ex.

23:14; 34:18, Deut.16:16). Jesus was keeping the commandments of God. In fact, **as the God of the Old Testament, Jesus had delivered the Ten Commandments**. He had come to dwell on earth as the only begotten Son of God the Father, born of the virgin Mary. Since He was God in the flesh, Jesus kept the commands that came from God, but Jesus did not keep the traditions that men had added to the commandments of God.

The Gospel accounts make it clear that Jesus did not follow the traditions of men. Jesus strongly denounced the traditions of the Jews—ALL OF THEM! Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus condemned them for rejecting the commandments of God in order to keep their traditions. He said, "...**Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?**... 'This people draw near to Me with their mouths, and with their lips they honor Me; but their hearts are far away from Me. But they worship Me in vain, teaching *for* doctrine *the* commandments of men' " (Matt. 15:3, 8-9).

Let's take a close look at these words of Jesus. Jesus emphatically declared to the leaders of Judaism that in keeping their own traditions, they were **transgressing the commandments of God**. In short, such behavior is SIN. Worship that is based on traditions of men is vain, empty and useless—just so much sanctimonious pretense. Yes, with their mouths and lips they professed to serve God, but their hearts were far from Him!

Think for a moment! Knowing that the traditions of Judaism transgress the commandments of God, would Jesus ever have followed these traditions? ABSOLUTELY NOT! What did Jesus do? The Scriptures tell us that He kept the Father's commandments: "If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as **I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love**" (John 15:10). Jesus went far beyond keeping only the letter of the law. He did those things that please the Father: "And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone **because I ALWAYS do the things that please Him**" (John 8:29).

Here is plain evidence in the New Testament that Jesus never observed the traditional Jewish 14/15 Passover. Had He done so, He would have been placing the traditions of men above the commandments of God. By such conduct, He would have been sinning against God! Rejecting the commandments of God and accepting the traditions of men as the rule of law constitutes sin and transgression. But Jesus did not sin at any time, as Paul expressly states in II Corinthians 5:21. The apostle Peter also records for us that Jesus "COMMITTED NO SIN" (I Pet. 2:22).

Jesus was twelve years old when He observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread with His parents in Jerusalem, as recorded in Luke 2:41-42. When the feast ended, Joseph and Mary departed to go back to Nazareth, but Jesus remained. Having discovered that He was missing, they returned to find Jesus "... in the temple, sitting in *the* midst of the teachers, both hearing them and questioning them. And all those who were listening to Him were amazed at *His* understanding and His answers" (verses 2:46-47).

How was it possible for Jesus to have such an extraordinary understanding of God's Word at so young an age? The Scriptures tell us that Jesus had the Holy Spirit of God without measure. Moreover, He was personally taught by God the Father.

Jesus' Education Was Not Pharisaic

Some have assumed that Jesus was trained and brought up according to Jewish tradition. Those who have swallowed this false assumption believe that Jesus practiced the religion of Judaism and conformed to the traditions of the Jews. They claim that Jesus was thoroughly Jewish in habit, custom, tradition, religion and outlook. Some even claim that Jesus was a Pharisee, perhaps a Pharisaical rabbi, and therefore Jesus would certainly have kept the Passover according to the traditions of the Jews. They insist that Jesus ate the Passover on the night of the 15th as a regular practice, as did the Pharisees and the religious leaders.

NOTHING COULD BE FARTHER FROM THE TRUTH! **Jesus was not taught by men, nor did He ever follow the traditions of men. Therefore He could not have been a Pharisee**. Here is what the Scriptures reveal about Jesus' education:

"But then, about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and was teaching. And the Jews were amazed, saying, 'How does this man know letters, **having never been schooled**?' " (John 7:14-15). The phrase "having never been schooled" means that **He was not taught in their schools**. He did not attend the rabbinical school of Hillel, as some have claimed. Jesus Himself tells us where He was educated: "Jesus answered them and said, '**My doctrine is not Mine, but His Who sent Me**' " (verse 16). Jesus' teachings were directly from God the Father, Who had personally taught Him. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, "I have many things to say and to judge concerning you; but He Who sent Me is true, and **what I have heard from Him, these things I speak to the world....I do nothing of Myself. But AS THE FATHER TAUGHT ME, these things I speak**" (John 8:26, 28).

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be educated directly by God the Father: "The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, to know to help the weary *with* a word. He awakens *Me* morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as one being taught. The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I was not rebellious, nor turned away backwards" (Isa. 50:4-5). As Isaiah had foretold, Jesus was awakened early in the morning by His Father's voice and was personally taught by Him. With daily instruction directly from God the Father, Jesus did not need to be taught by men.

Jesus' education involved not only hearing the Father, but also seeing the Father. So personal was His education from God the Father that Jesus actually saw the Father and what the Father did: "... Jesus answered and said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, the Son has no power to do anything of Himself [Jesus did not do His own will], but only what He sees the Father

do. For whatever He does, these things the Son also does in the same manner. For the Father loves the Son, and **shows** Him everything that He Himself is doing. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may be filled with wonder....I have no power to do anything of Myself; but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father, Who sent Me' " (John 5:19-20, 30). No one but Jesus could see the Father and what He was doing. This was a unique and special relationship between Jesus and God the Father.

These words of Jesus in the Gospel of John clearly show that Jesus was not taught by rabbis or any other men who practiced the traditions of Judaism. Concerning their traditional education and schooling, the Jews distinctly said that He was unlearned— "not having learned," as recorded in John 7:15. The Scriptures absolutely disprove the claim that Jesus was taught in the Pharisaic schools of the rabbis. As Jesus Himself testified, He was personally taught by God the Father. Jesus had direct, instant communication with God the Father at all times. The Gospels record that this special relationship with the Father existed when Jesus was twelve years old, and it had undoubtedly existed from His birth. Notice Jesus' answer to Joseph and Mary when they found Him teaching the religious leaders at the temple: "And He said to them, 'Why *is it* that you were looking for Me? Don't you realize that I must be about My Father's *business*?' But they did not understand the words that He spoke to them" (Luke 2:49-50).

As the Son of God, sent to be the Savior of mankind, Jesus had to have a perfect and complete understanding of the Father's will. If He had failed even once to do the will of the Father, this sin would have brought Him under the death penalty, and we would have no Savior. In order to know the Father's will in everything, Jesus had to be taught directly by God the Father. No man—no scribe, no Pharisee, no learned sage or rabbi—could have imparted this divine knowledge to Jesus. It is critical for us to understand this fact so that we will not be deceived into believing that Jesus was taught by men and that He kept the traditions of the Jews. Jesus did those things that pleased the Father, not those things that pleased the Jews. Jesus never observed a 14/15 Passover, as Jewish tradition required. As we have seen in our study of the Old Testament Passover, the temple sacrifice of the Passover lamb was not commanded by God but was instituted "according to the commandment of the king." The 14/15 Passover is a tradition of men—not a commandment of God! Because Jesus condemned the traditions of men, we know that He did not keep a 14/15 Passover. Instead, He openly condemned the traditions of Judaism as worthless substitutes for the commandments of God.

Jesus Did Not Keep the Passover of the Jews

In his Gospel, the apostle John uses different terminology to distinguish between the observance of the Passover as commanded by God and its observance as practiced by the Jews who followed the Pharisaic tradition. Some people do not realize that the traditional Passover of the Jews con-

flicted with the commands of God, and they claim that Christians should rely on the practice of the Jews as a guide for keeping the New Testament ceremony. That is not what the New Testament teaches! The Gospel accounts plainly reveal that the Jews' Passover did not follow the ordinances of God in the Old Testament. Christians should not look to the example of the Jews but to the example and commands of Jesus, Who kept the Passover in the spirit and manner that God desired.

The Gospel of John shows how far the Jews had strayed from the worship that God desired. John records that the Jews were actually defiling the temple of God with their corrupt practices: "Now **the Passover of the Jews** was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money exchangers sitting *there*; and after making a scourge of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, *with* both the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money exchangers, and overturned the tables. And to those who were selling the doves, He said, 'Take these things out of here! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise' " (John 2:13-16).

John tells us that this event occurred as the Jews were preparing for their traditional observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which he calls "**the Passover of the Jews**." Notice that John did not simply write "the Passover," or "the feast of the Lord," as he would have done if the Jews had been observing the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread according to the commands of God. Nowhere does John's account indicate that God approved of the manner in which the Jews were observing the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In fact, John shows quite the opposite! Jesus forcefully and openly denounced the Jews for polluting the feast of God with their merchandising and other corrupt practices!

John goes on to show that although the Jews professed to believe in God, they could not be trusted to do His will because they were filled with human nature: "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed on His name, as they observed the miracles that He was doing. But Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all *men*; and He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25).

These two conclusions can be drawn from John's account: 1) The fact that the observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is called "the Passover of the Jews" shows that the Jews were improperly observing these feast days. 2) John's statement about the nature of man shows why Jesus had to be taught by God the Father and not by man.

In later chapters, John uses similar terminology when referring to the Jews' observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "Now **the Passover, a feast of the Jews**, was near" (John 6:4). Again, John states, "Now the **Passover of the Jews** was near, and many went up from out of

the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, so that they might purify themselves" (John 11:55). John's repeated use of this terminology makes it clear that the Jews were not keeping these feast days as God intended them to be kept.

However, John writes differently when he refers to Jesus' last Passover, which was observed on the night of the 14th, the time that God commanded. Notice that John does not use the phrase "of the Jews" to describe this Passover: "Now six days before **the Passover**, Jesus came to Bethany..." (John 12:1). Again, John records, "Now before the **feast of the Passover**, knowing that His time had come to depart from this world to the Father..." (John 13:1). As the subsequent verses in John 13 show, John is referring to Jesus' last Passover, which He ate with His disciples on the 14th day of the first month, as commanded by God. The different terminology that John uses makes a clear distinction between Jesus' observance of the Passover and the Jews' observance of their feast.

In the Gospel of Matthew we find the words that Jesus spoke before His last Passover: "You know that after two days **the Passover takes place**, and the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified" (Matt. 26:2). In this verse, Jesus is clearly referring to the Passover day itself—not to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Matthew records that He was betrayed to be crucified on the very night that He ate the Passover with His disciples.

The account in the Gospel of Matthew confirms the meaning of John's terminology and makes it emphatically clear that Jesus kept the Passover on the night of the 14th, fulfilling all the ordinances of God for its observance under the Old Covenant. On that same night, Jesus instituted the Passover of the New Covenant, with the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine. He was subsequently seized, tried and crucified—all within the 24-hour period of the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month. As John's accounts shows, while these events were taking place, the Jews were still preparing to eat their Passover (John 18:28). **In view of the Scriptural evidence, there is no basis whatsoever for the claim that Jesus observed the Passover in the same manner as the Jews**.

Some Gospel Verses That Are Difficult to Understand

In the Gospel accounts of Jesus' last Passover, there are some verses pertaining to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb that are difficult to understand. These verses have caused much confusion in the minds of Bible students and scholars. When reading these verses, we need to remember what we have learned about the Passover day and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Our study of the commands of God in the Old Testament has confirmed that the Passover day is the 14th day of the first month. We also know that the 15th day of the first month is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There is no question or doubt concerning the proper sequence of these days as recorded in Leviticus 23:5-6.

In Chapters Four through Eight of this book, we studied the command of God to kill the Passover lamb on the 14th day of the first month at

ben ha arbayim, "between the two evenings," and we saw that the Scriptures define this Hebrew term as **the beginning** of the 14th, after *ba erev* or sunset of the 13th. There is no question about the proper time for killing the Passover lambs according to the commands of God.

However, there are three verses in the Gospel accounts that have caused a great deal of confusion due to the manner in which they are translated. In most versions of the Bible, including the *King James Version*, these verses have not been translated correctly. In order to understand the true meaning of these verses, we need to follow the rules for Bible study that are listed in Chapter One. As we apply these rules, we will come to a correct understanding of the meaning of these verses.

One verse which has caused much confusion is Matthew 26:17. In the *King James Version*, Matthew 26:17 is translated as follows: "Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?" Notice that three words in this verse are italicized. The use of italic letters indicates that these words are not present in the Greek text but have been inserted by the translators. These italicized words are intended to clarify the meaning of the text. However, the insertion of these words in Matthew 26:17 actually distorts the real meaning of this verse.

The words that have been inserted in this verse make it appear that it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare the Passover. We find similar wording in Mark's account, but no italicized words have been added: "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?" (Mark 14:12, *KJV*.)

Although the translators did not insert the words "*feast of*" before "unleavened bread," this translation of Mark 14:12 gives the impression that the lambs were killed on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Such a statement would be contrary to all records of Scripture and history. Neither the temple sacrifice nor the domestic sacrifice of the Passover ever took place on the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The domestic killing of the lambs took place at the beginning of the 14th. The temple sacrifice of the lambs began in the afternoon of the 14th and was completed before sunset.

The wording in Mark's account causes confusion because it appears to contradict these facts, as does the wording in Luke's account: "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7, *KJV*).

If these verses are actually stating that the lambs were killed on the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, then we are confronted with **gigantic problems**:

1) If the lambs were not killed until the beginning of the 15th day, the earliest that Jesus and His disciples could have eaten the Passover would be the night of the 15th, the same time that the Jews ate their traditional Passover. But the Gospel accounts clearly show that **Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover the night before the Jews did** (Luke 22:15, John 18:28).

2) If Jesus and His disciples had eaten the Passover on the night of the 15th, as some have claimed, then Jesus would not have been crucified until the afternoon of the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But the Gospel accounts record that **Jesus was crucified long before the 15th began** (Mark 15:25, John 19:16-18). **In fact, Jesus died at the ninth hour (3 PM) on the afternoon of the 14th** (Mark 15:34-37, John 19:28-31). **His body was taken down from the cross before the 15th began**: "The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, because it was a preparation *day* (for that Sabbath was a high day), requested of Pilate that their legs might be broken and *the bodies* be taken away" (John 19:31).

3) If Jesus had eaten the Passover on the night of the 15th, then the priests and religious leaders, who ate their Passover the night after Jesus and the disciples did, would have eaten their Passover on the night of the 16th. This sequence would place their Passover on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There is no record in the entire history of the Jews that the Passover was ever observed on the night of the 16th!

THE EVENTS DID NOT TRANSPIRE THAT WAY! These imaginary scenarios show the absolute fallacy in claiming that Jesus and His disciples observed the traditional late 14/early 15 Passover of the Jews. We can be absolutely positive that Jesus and His disciples did not eat the Passover on the night of the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It is obvious that the Gospel writers were **not** referring to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in describing the preparations for Jesus' observance of the Passover. What is the **true meaning** of the Gospel accounts by Matthew, Mark and Luke? We can find the answer by applying the rules for Bible study. First, we must understand the Greek words that were used by the Gospel writers.

Let's begin with Matthew 26:17: "Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread..." (*KJV*). Remember that the italicized words "*day*" and "*feast of*" were added by the translators of the *King James Version*. These words do not appear in the Greek text. In the Greek text, this phrase is written as follows (spelled in English letters): *Tee de protee toon azumoon*. These Greek words are correctly translated, "Now on the first of the unleaveneds."

The correct wording of Matthew 26:17, according to the Greek text, is "the first of the unleaveneds." What does this phrase mean? The term *toon azumoon*, "the unleaveneds," is the plural of *ta azuma*, which means

"the unleavened." By implication, *ta azuma*, "the unleavened," includes the word "bread." After all, it is bread which is leavened or unleavened. However, the plural form *toon azumoon*, "the unleaveneds," does not refer exclusively to the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

When we examine God's commands for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we find that the Passover day was also one of "the unleaveneds." These commands, as recorded in Exodus 12, are listed below:

> 1) By the beginning of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, all leavened bread had to be put out of the houses (Ex. 12:15, 19). The King James translation of Verse 15 appears to command that leaven be put out **on** the first day: "...even the first day ye shall put away leaven...." The words "shall put away" also appear in the *JPSA* version, but this translation of the Hebrew text is incorrect. As Verse 19 shows, all leaven had to be removed before the beginning of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Verse 15 is correctly translated "shall have put out leaven."
>
> 2) No leaven was to be found in their houses at any time during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:19).
>
> 3) They were not to have any leavened bread within any of their borders, which included the entire country (Ex. 13:7).
>
> 4) Unleavened bread was to be eaten for the Passover as well as for the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:8, 15).

A great deal of time and work was required to prepare every house and building in the entire country for the eight-day observance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Not only did all leavened bread have to be removed, but unleavened bread had to be prepared ahead of time. The *Mishnah* and other rabbinical writings are the only historical sources that give descriptions of the removal of the leaven and the baking of unleavened bread. While these records describe the traditional Jewish preparations for the eight-day feast, similar procedures were undoubtedly followed by those who kept the domestic Passover. Here is a summary of the procedures that are recorded in the rabbinical writings:

"*The 13th of Nisan*. On the evening of the 13th, which, until that of the 14th, was called the '*preparation of the Passover*' [John 19:14], every head of a family searched for and collected by the light of a candle all the leaven. Before beginning the search he pronounced the following benediction: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with thy commandments, and hast enjoined us to remove the leaven.' After the search he said, 'Whatever leaven remains in my posses-

sion which I cannot see, behold, it is null, and accounted as the dust of the earth' " (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Festivals," p. 354).

The rabbinical writings record that the Jews burned all leaven by 10 AM on the morning of the 14th. No one was to eat leaven after 11 AM. Those Jews who kept the temple Passover prepared and baked their unleavened bread by 3 PM on the afternoon of the 14th, in preparation for their Passover meal on the night of the 15th. Those who observed the domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th, according to God's ordinances in Exodus 12, would, of course, have baked their unleavened bread at an earlier time—perhaps on the afternoon of the 13th, or on the night of the 14th while the lambs were being roasted for the Passover meal. The first eating of unleavened bread took place at the observance of the Passover on the night of Nisan 14. Hence the Passover day, the 14th of Nisan, was in fact, "**the first of the unleaveneds**."

As recorded in the Gospels, "the first of the unleaveneds" was the day that the lambs were killed. Those who obeyed God's ordinances in Exodus 12 and kept the domestic Passover killed their lambs at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan. Those who followed the traditions of Judaism killed the lambs on the afternoon of the 14th. The Gospel writers were clearly referring to this day, and not to the 15th, as "the first of the unleaveneds." In New Testament times, this term was commonly used for the 14th day of the first month: "In the first century, it was commonly known that '**the day of the unleaveneds**' in Luke 22:7 was **the 14th Passover day**. G. Amadon in an article entitled 'The Crucifixion Calendar,' pointed out the error of those translators who translated this verse to read 'the first day of the festival.'[The following words are cited from this article.] 'But on what authority should the Hebrew translators, as Salkinson and Delitzch, introduce the word *chag* [a Hebrew word for "feast"], into these texts when the corresponding Greek has no word for "feast," and speaks only of the "first of the unleavened bread"—**a common expression for the Jewish 14th with practically all first century writers**" (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. LXIII, 1944, pp. 188-189, emphasis added).

The fact that "**the first of the unleaveneds**" refers to the 14th, the Passover day, and not to the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is unmistakably evident when we read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' last Passover. Let's take another look at Matthew's account. "Now on the first of the unleaveneds [the first of the eight days in which unleavened bread was required to be eaten], the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You desire *that* we should prepare for You to eat the Passover?' " (Matt. 26:17).

A correct understanding of the words in the Greek text ends the confusion caused by the wrong translation of the Passover accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The problem is solved by applying the rules for Bible study and by letting the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. By applying these rules, we have demonstrated that "the first of the unleaveneds" was the 14th day of the first month, which was the Passover day. All the records of

Scripture and history confirm that the Passover lambs were killed on the 14th day of the first month. That is when Jesus and the disciples kept the Passover. As stated before, truth agrees with Scripture; error does not agree with Scripture. The proper sense and meaning of Matthew 26:17 is revealed in this literal translation of the Greek text: "Now on the first of the unleaveneds, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You desire *that* we **prepare** for You to eat the Passover?' "

A literal translation of the verse in Luke's account gives us additional information that is most significant: "Then came **the day of the unleaveneds** in which it was obligatory to kill the Passover *lambs*" (Luke 22:7).

Notice that Luke uses the definite article "**the**" before the word "day." The use of the definite article in the Greek text makes the meaning of "day" more emphatic. Luke is placing emphasis on this particular day as **the** designated day for killing the lambs.

Luke tells us that on this specific day it "... **was obligatory** to kill the Passover lamb." The Greek word that is translated "obligatory" is *dei*, which means "mandatory, compulsory, obligatory, one must, or has to, is required to, compulsion of duty, and compulsion of law" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Hence, the author has properly translated *dei* as "**obligatory**."

The Greek word *dei* in Luke 22:7 also includes the meaning "under compulsion of law." Luke's use of *dei* is a direct reference to God's command in Exodus 12:6, which required that the killing of the Passover lamb be done at a specific time. We have thoroughly studied this command, and we have demonstrated that the **time commanded by God for the killing of the lamb was *ben ha arbayim*, "between the two evenings," or "between the setting-times"—at the beginning of the 14th. That is the time when it was obligatory for the lambs to be killed, according to the law of God**.

The use of the Greek word *dei* in Luke's account confirms that "the day of the unleaveneds" is referring to the 14th day of the first month, which was the day commanded by God for killing the lambs. According to God's command, the lambs were to be kept until the 14th. The specific point at which the 14th began was sunset, or *ba erev*, of the 13th. When we understand the full meaning of Luke's account, it is clear that it was the beginning of the 14th, immediately after the sun had set, when Jesus' disciples asked Him where they should prepare the Passover. The time of this event is conclusively established by the chronological details that are recorded in the Gospel of John.

In the next chapter, we will examine John's account of Jesus' last Passover and crucifixion. We will also examine Mark's account in greater detail to refute the false claim that Jesus' last Passover with His disciples was not a true Passover observance.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

JESUS' LAST PASSOVER—WHEN AND HOW WAS IT OBSERVED?

The last Passover that Jesus observed with His disciples is described in great detail by the Gospel writers. As we learned in the previous chapter, Mark and Luke both record that Jesus observed this Passover on the day that the lambs were sacrificed. This day is designated in the Greek text as "the first of the unleaveneds," which was a common term for the 14th day of Nisan, the first month of the Hebrew calendar. All Jews of that century understood that this term referred to Nisan 14.

Many scholars and teachers have misinterpreted Mark's and Luke's reference to the killing of the Passover lambs. Some view their words as evidence that the temple sacrifice of the lambs was taking place when Jesus sent His disciples to prepare the Passover. Since the lambs were traditionally sacrificed at the temple during the afternoon of Nisan 14, they claim that Jesus and the disciples observed a late Nisan 14/early Nisan 15 Passover, as did the Pharisaic Jews.

The error in this interpretation is clearly exposed by examining the Passover account in the Gospel of John. The chronological evidence that John presents allows no room for such an interpretation. Let us examine John's account.

Jesus Did Not Eat the Traditional Passover

As we begin our study, it is important to understand that John wrote his Gospel much later than Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote their Gospels. After the first three Gospels were written, false teachers rose up in an organized effort to stamp out the truth of God by subverting the early Christians. John was inspired to write his Gospel to preserve the true teachings of Jesus Christ and the true facts about His life and identity. Because of this, John recorded many facts and details that are not found in the other three Gospels. There is evidence in early historical works that at the time John was writing his Gospel, the 14/15 Passover controversy was already a major problem. That would explain why John describes Jesus' last Passover and the subsequent events in greater detail than the other Gospel writers.

The Gospel of John makes a clear distinction between the Passover of the Jews and the Passover that Jesus kept. The sequence of events that John records conclusively shows that Jesus did not observe the Passover at the traditional time. Unlike the other Gospel writers, John does not record the preparations for Jesus' last Passover. Instead, he begins with the events that took place at the Passover table, giving special emphasis to the footwashing that Jesus administered to His disciples, and to the words that He spoke during and after the Passover meal (John 13-17). John records that after the Passover, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was

betrayed by Judas and taken to stand trial before Caiaphas, who was the high priest of the Jews (John 18:1-14). Next, John records that Jesus was taken to the judgment hall of Pilate, the Roman governor. John states that it was early in the morning when He was condemned and brought before Pilate. His account makes it clear that at the time of this event, the Jewish religious leaders—the priests, scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees—**had not yet eaten their Passover**. Here is the testimony of John:

"Now then, they [the Jewish leaders and priests] led Jesus from Caiaphas to the judgment hall, and it was early. But they did not go into the judgment hall, so that they would not be defiled, but that **they might eat the Passover**" (John 18:28).

John relates that Jesus was brought before Pilate the morning after He had eaten the Passover with His disciples. But when the religious leaders of the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, **they had not yet eaten their Passover**. They did not enter into Pilate's judgment hall because they wanted to remain ceremonially clean in order to eat their Passover at the time they were accustomed to observing it. Apparently, this type of defilement would have extended beyond the end of the day. Otherwise they could have been cleansed by sunset and, after bathing, could have eaten their Passover.

John shows that the Passover they were preparing to eat was recognized as the official observance of the Jews: "(Now it was *the* **preparation of the Passover**, and about the sixth hour [6 AM]). And he [Pilate] said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' But they cried aloud, 'Away, away *with Him*! Crucify Him!' " (John 19:14-15).

When John identifies that day as "the preparation of the Passover," he is referring to the **traditional Nisan 15 Passover**, because the time for the domestic Passover was past! Jesus and the disciples had already observed the domestic Passover the night before. John's words are most significant because they rule out any possibility that Jesus' last Passover took place on the night of Nisan 15—the traditional time of the Jews' Passover. The sequence of events that John records shows that a full day passed between Jesus' last Passover and the traditional 15th Passover observed by the religious leaders of the Jews.

Remember, John was present at Jesus' last Passover. John was a participant at Jesus' last Passover, and an eyewitness of all the events that followed. His record of the sequence of events that took place in the hours between Jesus' last Passover and His crucifixion conclusively shows that Jesus observed the Passover at the beginning of the 14th.

John makes it clear that the religious leaders were going to eat their Passover lambs on the night of the 15th—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—by telling us that their Passover day was a "Sabbath" and a "high day." (The Jews used the term "high day" to distinguish an annual Sabbath from a weekly Sabbath.) Here is John's account: "The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath,

because it was a preparation *day* (for that Sabbath was a high day [a holy day]), requested of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *the bodies* be taken away" (John 19:31).

The fact that this Sabbath was a high day, or holy day, confirms that it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th day of the first month. The commands of God in Leviticus 23 clearly distinguish this day from the day that God ordained for the Passover: "In the fourteenth *day* of the first month, between the two evenings [*ben ha arbayim*], is the LORD'S Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD..." (Lev. 23:5-6).

John's testimony adds greatly to the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke. By establishing a full day's difference between the Passover that Jesus observed and the later Passover of the religious leaders, John contradicts all claims that Jesus observed a late 14/early 15 traditional Passover. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find any indication that Jesus observed the Passover at any other time than the time that is commanded in Exodus 12.

There is no doubt or question that Jesus observed His last Passover on the night of Nisan 14. This Scriptural fact poses a major problem for the advocates of a 15th Passover. Not willing to acknowledge the 14th as the Passover day that God ordained, they have devised a number of ways to explain the timing of Jesus' last Passover. Some speculate that Jesus' last Passover was not a real Passover. Those who have convinced themselves that the only Passover God ever commanded was the 15th, discount Jesus' last Passover as only a commemorative meal. In their view, it was not the Passover!

Others teach that Jesus observed His last Passover on the 14th because He was instituting the Christian Passover. They claim that He established a new Passover day—different from the Passover day that had always been observed. Still others teach that Jesus' observance of the 14th was an exception to His usual practice. They view His last Passover as a "pre-Passover meal." They claim that it was kept a day early because Jesus was going to be crucified and would not be able to keep it on the 15th.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, a well-known writer, sides with those who view Jesus' last Passover as an early observance. Because he assumes that all Jews of New Testament times observed the traditional Passover on Nisan 15, he views Jesus' observance of the 14th as "an early Passover meal." In his book *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, he shows the reasoning that led him to this conclusion. His statements reveal the dilemma that all advocates of a 15th Passover face when they read the Gospel accounts. Notice what he writes:

"**The date of the Last Supper**. During His ministry, Christ participated in several Passovers, the last being the occasion in which He instituted the Lord's Supper and offered Himself as the true Paschal Lamb

for our redemption. **A problem exists** as to the date of the Last Supper, the exact date of which affects the nature of the meal. **According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, Christ ate the Passover meal with His disciples on the day when 'they sacrificed the passover lamb'** (Mark 14:12; cf. Luke 22:7; Matt. 26:17), **which is Nisan 14**. [He assumes that it was the afternoon of the 14th, when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed at the temple.] **He was crucified the following day, Nisan 15**. This means that the Last Supper was most likely a Passover Supper since it was **partaken at the time the Jews ate their Passover meal**" (p. 55, emphasis added).

When we analyze this view of Jesus' last Passover, we find that it does not fit the Scriptural and historical records. The Gospel accounts clearly show that Jesus' last Passover took place on the same day as His crucifixion, and that was THE DAY BEFORE the traditional Passover of the Jews. The records of history verify that the traditional Jewish Passover was eaten on Nisan 15. Since Jesus was already dead and in the tomb before the Jews' Passover, He could not have been crucified on Nisan 15.

In presenting this view of Jesus' last Passover, Bacchiocchi is well aware that it conflicts with the Gospel records. The Gospel of John clearly shows that Jesus was crucified before Nisan 15, which was an annual Sabbath, or "high day": "And so, when Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished.' And bowing His head, He yielded up *His* spirit. The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath [which was rapidly approaching], because it was a preparation *day* [the afternoon of the 14th] (for that Sabbath was a high day [Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread]), requested of Pilate that their legs might be broken and *the bodies* be taken away" (John 19:30-31).

Like many scholars, Bacchiocchi has misinterpreted the words of the Gospel writers because he views their accounts solely from the perspective of the traditional Jewish Passover. As a result, he concludes that Matthew, Mark and Luke place Jesus' last Passover late on Nisan 14 and His crucifixion on Nisan 15. Because John contradicts this interpretation, he perceives John's account as a "discrepancy" in the Gospels. To resolve this conflict, he proposes a different view of Jesus' last Passover and crucifixion. Although this interpretation correctly places the two events on Nisan 14, the conclusion that Bacchiocchi draws from Jesus' observance of the 14th is totally unfounded. He states: "**However, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus was crucified on the day the Passover lamb was sacrificed** (John 19:14; 18:28), **Nisan 14**. This means He ate the Last Supper with His disciples **the day before the official Passover meal** [of the Jews]. In this case, Jesus' meal with his disciples may have been either **a specially arranged Passover meal or a farewell fellowship meal** [pure speculation] unrelated to Passover, because it was partaken of the evening before the official Passover" (Ibid., p. 55, emphasis added).

Bacchiocchi fails to consider that during Jesus' day a majority of the Jews were observing the domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th, as commanded by God in Exodus 12. There is ample historical evidence that the

14th Passover was the predominant practice in New Testament times. Bacchiocchi ignores that evidence and acknowledges only the "official Passover" of the Jews, which was not the Passover that God had ordained but the traditional Passover that the Pharisaic sect of the Jews and some of the priests ate on the night of the 15th. The official Passover of Judaism was observed a day later than the true Passover of God!

Because Bacchiocchi recognizes no other Passover than the traditional Nisan 15 observance, he concludes that Jesus' observance of the 14th was "a special paschal meal" kept a day early in anticipation of His crucifixion. Notice: "**An Early Passover Meal**. A plausible resolution of the discrepancy is to assume that the last Supper was **a special paschal meal** eaten the evening before the official Passover meal. The anticipation of the paschal meal could have been **motivated by the fact that Jesus knew He would suffer death** at Passover in fulfillment of the type provided by the slaying of the paschal lamb on Nisan 14. He knew He could not possibly eat of the paschal lamb at the usual time [assuming that Jesus kept the traditional Nisan 15 Passover] and Himself be sacrificed as the true Paschal Lamb when the lambs were slain [referring to the afternoon of Nisan 14]. It was more important that Christ's death should synchronize with the death of the Passover lambs [at the temple] than that His eating of the Passover meal synchronize with the official time of the Passover meal" (Ibid., p. 56, emphasis added).

Because Jesus did not eat His last Passover at the same time as the Jews, Bacchiocchi concludes that Jesus was observing "an early Passover meal." His reasoning is based on the assumption that the traditional Passover of the Jews was observed at the correct time. But our study of the Passover ordinances in Exodus 12 has demonstrated that the traditional Nisan 15 Passover was not in accord with the commands of God. Bacchiocchi errs greatly when he looks to Jewish tradition as his standard for determining whether Jesus observed the Passover at the correct time. The evidence of Scripture and history shows that **Jesus' observance of Nisan 14 was not "an early Passover meal" but was precisely on time. It was the traditional Nisan 15 Passover that was observed on the wrong day**. Those who judge Jesus' observance of the Passover by Jewish tradition are basing their faith on the practices of men rather than on the Word of God and on the example of the Son of God.

Because he has chosen the wrong standard, Bacchiocchi has grossly misinterpreted the accounts of Jesus' last Passover and crucifixion. He erroneously concludes that Jesus' crucifixion in the afternoon of Nisan 14 was timed to coincide with the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. He overlooks the fact that the time of Jesus' death was set long before the temple sacrifice was instituted. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself as the Lamb of God was planned from the foundation of the world—it was not timed to synchronize with a tradition of men.

Bacchiocchi's interpretation of the Gospel accounts is based not only on Jewish tradition but also on the views of the early Catholic fathers. After the days of the apostles, their teachings began to lead true believers away

from the observance of the Christian Passover on Nisan 14. Bishops arose in the early churches, promoting the Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist as a replacement for the Passover ceremony that Jesus had instituted. Under the influence of Judaizers, many believers had already forsaken Nisan 14 in favor of a Nisan 15 Passover. After persuading them to adopt the Eucharist, the next step was to move the observance from Nisan 15 to Easter Sunday. This was accomplished by the decree of the Nicene Council in AD 325. At that time, the sacrament of the Eucharist on Easter Sunday became the official Catholic replacement for the Christian Passover.

In his book, Bacchiocchi explains the Roman Catholic view of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, and concludes that it was within the authority of the Catholic Church to institute the observance of Easter as a Christian practice. Those who read his book *God's Festivals in Scripture and History* need to be aware that his view of the Scriptures has been molded by Catholic theology. His reasoning may appear to be logical, but the teachings that he is promoting do not conform to the Word of God.

In Old Testament times, Satan inspired the followers of Baal and Asherah to deceive the children of Israel in order to draw them away from God's commands for the Passover. In our times, Satan is still doing his handiwork by causing great confusion over the Christian Passover. In addition to the 14/15 controversy, the devil is deceiving people today with a host of unscriptural *Christianized* pagan counterfeits! Among these substitute religious rites are the Lord's Supper, Communion, and the Eucharist. Satan's tactics are the same and his goals are the same—to keep the world in deception and to lure true Christians away from the teachings of Jesus Christ. As always, he has accomplished it through **false doctrines**. People choose to believe false doctrines because they do not love the truth of God (II Thess. 2:10).

We can be thankful that God has preserved His truth for us. Neither Satan nor men can destroy the truth of God! Satan may try to bury the truth under an avalanche of lies and false doctrines, but the truth of God always prevails. Yes, the truth of God's Word is available and can be understood in spite of mistranslations or misrepresentations. By carefully studying His Word, we can find and understand the truth of God.

Understanding the Gospel Accounts of Jesus' Last Passover

Was the meal that Jesus ate on the night of Nisan 14 "an early Passover meal," as Bacchiocchi claims? The Gospel of Mark gives us the answer. Let's begin our study with a translation of Mark 14:12 that accurately conveys the meaning of the Greek text: "And on the first of the unleaveneds, when they were killing the Passover *lambs*, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You desire that we go and prepare, so that You may eat the Passover?' "

As we learned in Chapter Eighteen, "the first of the unleaveneds" is designating the 14th of Nisan—the first day of the eight-day festival requiring the removal of leaven and the eating of unleavened bread. That

was the day God ordained for killing the Passover lambs, as recorded in Exodus 12.

The next words in Mark 14:12 are most significant because of the intrinsic meaning of the Greek verb: "...when they were killing the Passover...." The English words "they were killing" are translated from the Greek verb ***ethuon***. The verb root is ***thuo***. The verb ***ethuon*** reflects the following case and action: third person plural—"they"; imperfect—showing action that was not completed but was taking place at that very moment—"**were killing**"; active indicative—showing action being done personally at that moment by the subject—"**they**."

Mark's use of the Greek verb ***ethuon*** shows that THE LAMBS WERE BEING KILLED AT THAT VERY MOMENT AS JESUS SENT HIS DISCIPLES TO PREPARE THE PASSOVER! Mark is not referring to the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs, which traditionally took place in the afternoon of Nisan 14. Since Jesus ate the Passover the night before the traditional observance, Mark can only be referring to **the domestic sacrifice of the lambs at the beginning of Nisan 14**.

The word "they" in Mark 14:12 refers to those who were killing the Passover lambs at houses or inns where the domestic Passover would be kept. Mark's record of the killing of the lambs at the time that Jesus sent His disciples to prepare the Passover confirms that **many Jews in New Testament times were observing the domestic Passover**. Clearly, Jesus and His disciples did not observe a "special paschal meal" at a different time from other Jews in Jerusalem. Mark's testimony exposes this teaching as a false doctrine of men.

When Mark's account is combined with Luke's account, the meaning becomes even clearer. Here are Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 combined in a literal translation: "**On the first day of the unleaveneds, in which it was obligatory to kill the Passover *lambs*, when they were killing the Passover *lambs*, His disciples asked Him, 'Where do You desire that we go and prepare, so that You may eat the Passover?**' "

There is no question that these verses are referring to the domestic sacrifice of the lambs at the beginning of Nisan 14, as commanded by God. That is when the disciples were accustomed to keeping the Passover. Because the Jewish religious authorities were watching for Him, Jesus had not previously sent His disciples into Jerusalem to prepare for the Passover. They knew that it would soon be time to eat the Passover, but they did not know where Jesus wanted them to make the necessary preparations. Since the domestic killing of the Passover lambs was happening before their very eyes, the disciples asked this urgent question, "**Where do You desire that we go and prepare, so that You may eat the Passover?**"

Consider for a moment! If you were one of the disciples and could see the Passover lambs being killed at the houses that very moment, and you knew that the Passover was at hand, wouldn't you ask the same question?

The events that the Gospel writers were inspired to record show **that the domestic Passover was a common practice**. The disciples were obviously accustomed to keeping the domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th or they would not have asked Jesus at that time, "**Where do You desire that we should go and prepare so that You may eat the Passover?**"

The records of history verify that the domestic Passover was widely observed at that time. The great multitude of Jews who assembled in Jerusalem each year to keep the Passover made the domestic sacrifice of the lambs an absolute necessity. As we learned in Chapter Seventeen of this book, the temple could not possibly accommodate the vast number of lambs required for everyone to keep the Passover within the allotted time. It would have taken several days for all the lambs to be killed before the altar. Those Jews who practiced the teachings of the Pharisees took their lambs to the temple, but a majority of the Jews killed their lambs at houses and inns in Jerusalem and other cities within the greater festival area. When we examine the three Gospel accounts that record Jesus' instructions to His disciples, it is obvious that the domestic sacrifice of the Passover was being observed. The evidence is overwhelming!

Matthew's Account: "Now on the first of the unleaveneds, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You desire *that* we prepare **for You to eat the Passover?**' And He said, 'Go into the city to such a man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, 'My time is near; **I will keep the Passover** with My disciples at your *house*.' " ' Then the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and **prepared the Passover**" (Matt. 26:17-19).

Mark's Account: "And on the first day of the unleaveneds, **when they were killing the Passover *lambs***, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do you desire that we go and prepare, so **that You may eat the Passover?**' And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and you shall meet a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. And whatever house he shall enter, say to the master of **the house** *that* the Teacher says, "Where is the guest chamber, where **I may eat the Passover** with My disciples?" And he shall show you a large upper room, furnished *and* ready. There prepare for us.' And His disciples went away, and *when* they came into the city, they found *it* exactly as He had said to them; and they **prepared the Passover**" (Mark 14:12-16).

Luke's Account: "Then came the day of the unleaveneds in which **it was obligatory to kill the Passover *lambs***. And He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go *and* prepare **the Passover** for us **that we may eat**.' But they said to Him, 'Where do You desire *that* we prepare *it*?' And He said to them, 'Watch, *and* when you come into the city, you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into **the house** that he enters; and you shall say to the master of **the house**, "The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest chamber, where **I may eat the Passover** with My disciples?' And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there prepare." Then they went *and* found *everything* exactly as He had said to them; and **they prepared the Passover**" (Luke 22:7-13).

These three Gospel accounts make it absolutely clear that Jesus observed the domestic Passover at the same time that thousands of other Jews were observing it. Jesus specifically told the disciples to prepare THE PASSOVER. IT WAS THE PASSOVER THAT JESUS ATE, NOT SOME OTHER TYPE OF MEAL! JESUS HIMSELF SAID, "I WILL EAT THE PASSOVER WITH MY DISCIPLES." Jesus did not eat a "pre-Passover meal," kept a day early—it was the commanded time for observing the Passover!

Jesus' own words to His disciples testify that this was the observance of the Passover—not a "pre-Passover meal." **The word "Passover" is used eleven times in the three Gospel accounts**. The use of **the word "house**" in two of the accounts shows that this was the domestic Passover. Jesus did not command Peter and John to go to the temple to sacrifice a Passover lamb. He commanded them to follow a certain man to a certain house and prepare the Passover at that house. Not once is the temple mentioned, nor is a temple sacrifice of the Passover remotely indicated in these accounts. There is no question that Jesus kept the domestic Passover at the beginning of the 14th day of the first month, as commanded in Exodus 12.

In their study papers and doctrinal presentations, the advocates of a 15th Passover ignore these direct statements of Jesus about His last Passover. They refuse to acknowledge Jesus' own words. But ignoring these Scriptures cannot change the reality of what the Gospel writers recorded! Their accounts make it explicitly clear that **Jesus' last Passover was not a pre-Passover meal or a special supper, kept a day earlier than the commanded time. Nor did Jesus change the Passover from the day that it had always been observed, as some advocates of a 15th Passover claim. These misleading teachings are completely contradicted by Jesus Christ's own statements as recorded in the Gospels**.

Jesus gave these instructions to Peter and John: "And you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest chamber, where **I may eat the Passover with My disciples**?" ' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; **there** [in that house] **prepare**" (Luke 22:11-12).

The Gospel accounts do not specify whether the disciples' preparations included killing the Passover lamb. It is possible that Peter and John killed the lamb themselves. However, since the guest chamber was furnished and ready, it is more likely that the master of the house had already killed the lamb by the time Peter and John arrived. In that case, they would have begun roasting the lamb and setting out the other foods for the meal, making sure that the unleavened bread and wine were ready. They completed whatever was necessary to prepare the Passover. Luke records, "Then they went *and* found *everything* exactly as He had said to them; and **they prepared the Passover**" (Luke 22:13).

The length of time required for preparation was determined by the size of the lamb. According to God's commands, the Passover lamb could not be more than a year old (Ex. 12:5), and it could not be less than eight days old

(Lev. 22:27). The older the lamb, the more it would weigh and the longer it would take to roast. Conversely, the smaller the lamb, the more quickly it could be roasted. When we consider the events that followed the Passover, it is clear that Jesus did not have time for a long, extended meal. It is probable that the lamb for Jesus' last Passover was a very small lamb, which would require less time for roasting. If the lamb was only eight days old—the minimum age for a Passover lamb—it would weigh 10-12 pounds and would require only one and a half hours of roasting.

Peter and John completed the preparations, and at the appointed time Jesus and the other disciples came to eat the Passover. If the lamb was very small, the Passover meal could have been ready as early as 7:30 PM. The subsequent events of that night indicate that the Passover meal began early and probably ended by 9 or 9:30 PM. Luke records Jesus' words at the beginning of the Passover meal: "Now when the hour had come, He sat *down*, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said to them, 'With *earnest* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you that I will not eat of it again until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God' " (Luke 22:14-16).

In summary, the New Testament clearly reveals that:

1) Jesus kept the Passover, not a "pre-Passover meal."
2) Jesus observed it at the time commanded by God.
3) Jesus ate this Passover at the beginning of the 14th day.
4) The lamb that was eaten at Jesus' last Passover was not sacrificed at the temple.

Jesus kept the Passover at the time He had always observed it, according to the commands in Exodus 12. If He had not done so, He would have been disregarding and opposing the very instructions that He gave as the Lord God of Israel. Had Jesus chosen at any time during His life in the flesh to obey the traditions of men instead of the commandments of God, He would have sinned. And if He had sinned, He could not have become our Savior!

In view of the evidence in the Gospel accounts, there is no question that Jesus kept the Passover on the night of the 14th, as commanded by God. On the other hand, the religious leaders of the Jews combined their Passover observance with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and ate their Passover on the night of the 15th. Because they had replaced the commandment of God with their own tradition, they did not recognize Jesus as the true Passover Lamb of God. Instead, they condemned Jesus Christ to die, proclaiming that they were willing to let His blood be on them and their children. In rejecting the only Savior Who could bring them salvation, they sentenced themselves to remain in their sins and to suffer the judgment of God.

Jesus Institutes New Passover Ordinances

As the Gospel writers recorded the time of Jesus' last Passover, so they recorded the manner in which it was observed. Their accounts do not

focus on the observance of the Old Testament Passover but on the new ceremony that Jesus instituted at that time. They relate the order of the new ceremony and the meaning of the new symbols that Jesus instituted in place of the Passover supper.

Some writers have compared Jesus' observance of the Passover with the Jewish practice of the Seder meal, as do Ceil and Moishe Rosen in their book Christ in the Passover. The Seder meal was adopted by the Pharisaic Jews after the destruction of the temple in AD 70. When they could no longer sacrifice their Passover lambs at the temple, they substituted a token shank bone for the roast lamb of the Passover, as was first practiced by the Jewish exiles in Babylon. There is no Scriptural basis for the Jewish Seder, just as there is no foundation in Exodus 12 for the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. Christians who are truly following Jesus Christ will not seek to imitate the practices of the Jews but will imitate Jesus' own example and teachings.

The Gospel accounts reveal the three new Passover ordinances that Jesus taught His followers to observe. Each of these ordinances is a vital component of the Christian Passover, in which all true Christians are commanded to participate. These three ordinances are (1) the footwashing, (2) the unleavened bread, and (3) the wine.

1) The Footwashing. The first ordinance of the Christian Passover is the footwashing. Jesus commands His followers to wash one another's feet, as He did the disciples'. Today, very few professing Christians observe His command. The ceremony of footwashing has been rejected and impugned as "beneath the dignity" of church members. They cannot bring themselves to stoop down and wash one another's feet. By refusing to follow the example of Jesus Christ, they are esteeming themselves above the Lord and Master Whom they profess to serve.

Although Catholics do not practice a form of the ordinance of footwashing, the popes traditionally wash the feet of twelve seminary students on the eve of Easter. Many Catholic bishops and priests also practice this rite at Easter. But this token footwashing during the religious festival of Easter does not fulfill the command of Jesus. The observance of Easter has no place in the worship of Jesus Christ. This religious holiday, which was adopted from paganism by the early church fathers, is an abomination to God!

If we are truly followers of Christ, we will fulfill the ordinances of the Christian Passover exactly as He commanded, including the footwashing. Jesus said that **if His followers do not wash one another's feet, they will have no part with Him**. He commands every one of His followers to take part in the footwashing ceremony. The fact that John records the account of the footwashing in great detail shows the importance of Jesus' command.

Some confusion has arisen over the time of the footwashing due to a mistranslation of John 13:2, which reads: "And supper being ended..." (*KJV*).

This King James translation makes it appear that the footwashing took place after the Passover meal. However, the words in the Greek text were not translated correctly. The Greek verb that is translated "being ended" in John 13:2 is *genomenou*. It is a **present tense** middle voice participle. It is incorrect to translate this present tense verb into the past tense, as in the *King James Version*. A correct translation of this Greek participle is "while supper was taking place." In *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, Berry uses the translation "supper taking place."

Since the root of *genomenou* is *genomai*, which means "to come into being," it is obvious that the time being designated was at or near the beginning of the Passover meal. John 13:2 could also be translated in the following manner: "As supper was beginning...." or "during supper"—shortly after it began.

As we continue reading the account, it is clear that the context supports this translation. We are told that Jesus rose from supper (verse 4). After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus sat down again (Greek "reclined") to eat (verse 12). Jesus said, "The one who is eating bread with me..." (verse 18). Jesus dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas, who ate it (verse 26). All these verses show that the footwashing took place at the beginning of the meal, soon after the disciples were seated at the table. In performing this act, Jesus took upon Himself the duty of a lowly servant of that day, who was required to wash the feet of his master's guests when they arrived.

Here is the full account of Jesus' washing of His disciples' feet, translated as accurately as possible in order to capture the full significance of what Jesus was doing: "And during supper (the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, that he should betray Him), Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into *His* hands, and that He came from God and was going to God; rose from supper and laid aside *His* garments; and after taking a towel, He secured it around Himself. Next, He poured water into a washing basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel which He had secured.

"Then He came to Simon Peter; and he said to Him, 'Lord, are You going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you shall know after these things.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall not wash my feet, not ever.'

"Jesus answered him, '**If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me**.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head.' Jesus said to him, 'The one who has been washed does not need to wash *anything other* than the feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all.' For He knew the one who was betraying Him; this was the reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

"Therefore, when He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments *and* had sat down again, He said to them, '**Do you know what I have done to you**? You call Me the Teacher and the Lord, and you speak rightly, because I am. Therefore, **if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed**

your feet, you also are duty-bound to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, *to show* that you also should do exactly as I have done to you.

" 'Truly, truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, nor a messenger greater than he who sent him. **If you know these things, blessed are you IF YOU DO THEM**' " (John 13:2-17, emphasis added).

These words of Jesus Christ convey how vitally important it is for every Christian to participate in the footwashing ceremony. Do you claim that Jesus Christ is your Lord? Is He your Teacher? Does the profession of your lips match your obedience to Jesus Christ? If not, why not?

If you do not keep the Christian Passover—and if you do not participate in the footwashing as part of this observance—**YOU HAVE NO PART WITH JESUS CHRIST**. Remember Jesus' warning: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but the one who is doing [practicing] the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven**" (Matt. 7:21).

Was not Jesus teaching the will of God the Father? Did not Jesus say we should be practicing footwashing as part of the Christian Passover? He absolutely commands it! Anyone who professes the name of Christ and claims to love Him should be keeping His commandments. Jesus Himself said so: "If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments" (John 14:15). Are you keeping the commandments of Jesus Christ? If not, you should be! If you are truly seeking the will of God and salvation through Jesus Christ, you must be willing to obey Him in every respect. (See Appendix X for a more in-depth study on the timing of the footwashing ceremony.)

The Gospel of John records that after the footwashing, Jesus sat down with His disciples to eat. During the meal, He gave a morsel to Judas Iscariot. After Judas had eaten it, Satan entered into Judas, and he left to betray Jesus (John 13:26-27).

Most people assume that the morsel which Jesus gave to Judas was a small piece of unleavened bread. However, it is possible that it was a morsel of the roasted Passover lamb, or a small bit of bread with meat or bitter herbs. By this act, Jesus was signifying the end of the Passover supper. Then He instituted the new Passover symbols of the unleavened bread and the wine.

2) The unleavened bread. The second ordinance of the Christian Passover is the breaking and eating of the unleavened bread as the symbol of Christ's body: "And He took the bread, *and* after giving thanks, He broke *it* and gave *it* to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. This do in the remembrance of Me' " (Luke 22:19). Mark and Matthew also show that the unleavened bread symbolized the body of Jesus. Here is Mark's account: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, *and* after blessing *it*, He

broke *it* and gave *it* to them, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body' " (Mark 14:22). Matthew records: "And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and blessed *it*, *then He* broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body' " (Matt. 26:26).

The apostle Paul wrote this account of Jesus' last Passover: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and after giving thanks, He broke *it*, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body, which *is* being broken for you. This do in the remembrance of Me' " (I Cor. 11:23-24).

As was the bread of the Old Testament Passover, the bread of this new Passover ceremony was wholly unleavened. Because it represents the sinless body of Jesus Christ, the bread of the Christian Passover must never be leavened. During the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, leaven is used as a type of sin. To partake of bread that is leavened during the Christian Passover ceremony is a violation of the ordinance that Jesus instituted and a denigration of the body of Christ, Who was without sin. (See Appendix Y, Christ's Last Passover—Leavened or Unleavened, by Ben T. Ambrose.)

After the disciples had eaten the unleavened bread, Jesus instituted the third ordinance of the Christian Passover—drinking of the wine.

3) The Wine. The cup of wine that Jesus passed to the disciples represented His blood, which would be shed to establish the New Covenant: "In like manner also, *He took* the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup *is* the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you' " (Luke 22:20). Mark gives a more detailed account of Jesus' words: "And He took the cup; *and* after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them; and they all drank of it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood, the blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I will not drink again at all of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' " (Mark 14:23-25). Matthew clearly states the purpose for which Jesus shed His blood: "And He took the cup; and after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it; for this is My blood, the *blood* of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for *the* remission of sins' " (Matt. 26:27-28).

No covenant is of any force or effect until it has been sealed with the blood of a sacrifice. Jesus Himself laid down His life (John 10:17-18), and was sacrificed. His own blood was shed to seal the New Covenant, which offers the promise of eternal life. Under the New Covenant, all who repent of their sins can receive forgiveness from God the Father through the blood of Jesus Christ. This remission of sins is granted when the believer fulfills the Scriptural command to repent and be baptized in water. At that time he is conjoined into the death of Jesus Christ in a covenant symbolic death through belief and faith in Jesus' atoning blood. The repentant believer then receives the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. At this point, through the grace of God, the believer enters into a special, spiritual covenant relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. This relationship requires willing obe-

dience from the heart to the commandments of God as spiritually magnified by Jesus Christ. As the believer strives each day to live by every word of God, he or she remains in fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and His blood covers every sin (I John 1:6-7).

Every Christian who enters the New Covenant relationship is commanded by God to renew the covenant each year by participating in the Christian Passover ceremony on the 14th of Nisan. In partaking of the symbols of Jesus' body and blood, the believer is reaffirming his or her personal continued acceptance of His sacrifice for sin, and is renewing his or her commitment to walk in obedience to the commandments of God. Christians who do not participate in this ceremony are cutting themselves off from the covenant relationship and will no longer have their sins covered by the blood of Jesus. His blood is the sacrificial blood of the New Covenant and is applied only to those who continue in the covenant relationship.

The disciples of Jesus did not understand the meaning of the symbols that He offered to them on the night of His betrayal, or the words that He spoke to them at that time. They did not know that He would soon sacrifice His life to establish the New Covenant. When all had partaken of the symbols representing His broken body and His shed blood, the institution of the Christian Passover—the Passover of the New Covenant—was complete. After singing a hymn, or psalm, they departed for the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30).

In this chapter, we have seen Scriptural proof that Jesus' last Passover was indeed a true Passover observance on the 14th day of the first month. After eating the Passover supper with His disciples, Jesus administered the new symbols for the Christian Passover. As the Gospel accounts show, the disciples ate the broken unleavened bread and drank from the cup of wine, which Jesus called "the fruit of the vine" (Mark 14:25).

There is not one word in these accounts to support the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which claims that the prayer of the priest changes a wafer of bread into the actual flesh of Jesus Christ, and the wine into His blood. No man has been empowered by God to transform a piece of bread and a cup of wine into the flesh and blood of His Son! The Catholic Mass and other counterfeits of the Christian Passover are nothing more than Christianized versions of Baal and Asherah worship. The Catholic doctrines of Easter, the celebration of the Mass, and the transubstantiation of the wafer, or host, originated in the doctrines of pagan gods and false religions. It is beyond the scope of this book to document the complete paganization of Christianity. However, it is recommended that the reader study the following two books, which are exhaustive works on the subject: *The Two Babylons*, or *Papal Worship* by Alexander Hislop; and *The Golden Bough* by Sir James George Frazer.

In the next chapter, we will answer a very important question: Should the Christian Passover be observed more that once in the year?

CHAPTER TWENTY

HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVER BE OBSERVED?

How often should we partake of the Christian Passover? Should we observe it many times during the year? Will observing it often make us more righteous, or help us obtain favor with God? What do the Scriptures teach?

The Old Testament reveals that the Passover was instituted as an annual observance. God commanded that the Passover be observed each year on the 14th day of the first month, according to the Hebrew calendar. Throughout Old Testament times, the Passover was observed only once a year. Although the later temple-centered Passovers were not observed at the time that God commanded, they were observed only once a year. There is no Scriptural or historical record of any dispute over how often the Passover lambs should be killed and the Passover meal eaten. On the other hand, there is great disagreement as to how often we should observe the footwashing and the bread and wine ceremony that is commanded in the New Testament.

Numerous church organizations profess to follow the New Testament command, but each has its own version of this Christian ceremony. Some call it "the Lord's Supper," and others call it "Holy Communion" or "the Eucharist." Some teach that it should be observed every week, and others teach that it should be observed only at Christmas and Easter. Very few observe it on the day that it was instituted. In fact, most churches overlook the fact that Jesus instituted this ceremony on the Passover day. As a result, the vast majority of professing Christians do not even recognize this ceremony as the Passover of the New Covenant. They view it only as a commemorative ceremony, to be observed at the time and in the manner that their church authorities decree. In Catholic and Orthodox churches, the priest administers the Eucharist each time Mass is held, and one may attend Mass every day in the week. Mass may be held at different hours of the day, from early morning to midnight. Because all members are required to attend Sunday Mass, it may be held several times that day, with a Saturday evening Mass offered as an alternative. In addition, there are special Masses for major church holidays, funerals, marriages, and prayers for the dead. Since the Eucharist is administered at every Mass, members of Catholic and Orthodox churches may participate in this ceremony hundreds of times during the year. To celebrate the Eucharist, the priest passes a special ceremonial round wafer of unleavened bread to each participant. However, the priest does not break the bread. The priest who performs the Mass drinks from a goblet of wine, but is not required to pass the goblet to the participants.

In many Protestant churches, the Lord's Supper is administered each Sunday during worship services. Instead of unleavened bread and wine,

most denominations use leavened bread and grape juice, or water, as do those who are members of The Latter Day Saints of the Church of Jesus Christ—the Mormons. Some, including the Seventh-Day Adventists, observe their Lord's Supper quarterly—four times a year. Others celebrate it only once or twice yearly at Christmas and/or Easter.

Few professing Christians ever think to question whether the practice of their church conforms to the teachings of Jesus Christ. They assume that they are observing the New Testament ceremony exactly as He commanded, yet they observe it in many different ways at many different times. Are all these differing practices acceptable to God? How can we know?

The answer is revealed in the Word of God. At His last Passover, Jesus Christ demonstrated how the New Testament Passover should be observed, both by His example and by His commands. The teachings of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the New Testament, are the one true standard.

Today, very few church goers are practicing what Jesus Christ taught. This most solemn ceremony, commemorating the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ our Savior, has been so grossly misobserved that its full meaning and purpose has been hidden from most professing Christians. Only a small minority understand that Jesus Christ instituted this ceremony as an annual renewal of the New Covenant relationship that each true believer has with Him and God the Father.

Three Fundamental Errors

The true observance of the Christian Passover has been buried under a barrage of conflicting practices. This confusion can be traced to **three fundamental errors**:

1) The first error is the assumption that the time that God ordained for the Passover in the Old Testament does not apply to the New Testament ceremony that Jesus instituted. This belief is based on the false teaching that the commands of God in the Old Testament were only for the Jews and are contrary to the New Testament doctrine of salvation through faith. According to this theological view, all the laws and commandments of God were abolished when Jesus died on the cross. This mistaken view of the Scriptures has led Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches alike to reject the day that God established and to adopt other times for observing the Christian Passover.

The teachings of Jesus Christ Himself expose their error in rejecting the commandments of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY WORD that proceeds out of *the* mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). When Jesus spoke these words, He was not establishing a new teaching but was pointing to a very old teaching of Scripture. The words that He spoke had been proclaimed by Moses many centuries before, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:3). By quoting the words of Moses, Jesus was confirming the authority of the words of God in the Old Testament.

The apostles, who were taught directly by Jesus Christ, understood that the Old Testament Scriptures are authoritative and applicable to Christians. The apostle Paul's words to Timothy show that the teachings of the Old Testament are essential to fully understand and practice the Christian way of life: "And that from a child you have known the Holy Writings, which *are* able to **make you wise unto salvation through faith**, which *is* in Christ Jesus. **ALL SCRIPTURE** [all the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament] ***is*** **God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine**, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; **so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work**" (II Tim. 3:15-17).

The New Testament does not teach that the commandments of God in the Old Testament have all been abolished by Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus forbids us to let this thought even enter our minds. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus proclaimed, "**DO NOT THINK THAT I HAVE COME TO ABOLISH THE LAW or the Prophets; I DID NOT COME TO ABOLISH, BUT TO FULFILL**. For truly I say to you, **until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law** until everything has been fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17-18). These words of Jesus are a direct reference to the books of the Old Testament, which were grouped into three main divisions: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. Since heaven and earth have not passed away and all the prophecies in the Old Testament have not been fulfilled, the Law and the Prophets are still in effect. Anyone who claims otherwise is opposing and contradicting the words of Jesus Christ.

It is important to understand what Jesus meant when He declared that He had come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. The word "fulfill" does not mean "to nullify" or "undo," as does the word "abolish." In fact, to "fulfill" means just the opposite: "to carry out, to do," or "to obey, to fill the requirements of," or "satisfy," or "to complete," and "to bring to an end" (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*).

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets in three ways. First, Jesus magnified the meaning of God's law, as prophesied by Isaiah: "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness sake; He will magnify [or exalt] the Law and make *it* glorious" (Isa. 42:21).

Jesus' magnification of the laws and commandments of God is clearly evident in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 5-7). The reader is encouraged to study these profound teachings. The teachings of Jesus expand the application of all the laws and commandments of God, filling their spiritual meaning to the full and establishing a higher spiritual standard of obedience under the New Covenant.

Secondly, Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies concerning His life, crucifixion, death and resurrection. After His resurrection, He continued to fulfill the Law and the Prophets by inspiring His apostles to record His teachings for the New Covenant. This was also prophesied by Isaiah: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples" (Isa. 8:16).

Thirdly, Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets by bringing the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices to an end. Jesus Christ superseded the Levitical priesthood with a far greater spiritual priesthood as our High Priest at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. By offering Himself as the perfect and complete sacrifice of God, Jesus fulfilled all the animal sacrifices that were required under the Old Covenant, including the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. **The commands and requirements for animal sacrifices and other temple rituals were the only laws that were brought to an end by the death of Jesus Christ**. The Ten Commandments and other laws of God in the Old Testament did not end when Jesus died on the cross.

Unfortunately, most theologians teach that the only meaning of the word "fulfill" is "to bring to an end." This teaching has led professing Christians in many churches to believe that the death of Jesus Christ brought all the commandments and laws of God to an end.

The majority of professing Christians today do not understand that the weekly Sabbath and holy days of God were established at the creation of the world and are still in effect (Gen. 2:2-3 and 1:14). Most Christians have been taught that these days were not observed until the time of Moses and the Old Covenant, and that they were abolished along with the Old Covenant when Jesus was crucified. But the New Testament does not support this teaching. As the Gospel of Matthew shows, Jesus did not come to earth to abolish the laws of God, but to fulfill them.

This false teaching has deceived millions of professing Christians into believing that they are not required to keep the commandments of God. As a result, those who practice commandment-keeping are accused of denying the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and attempting to earn salvation by works of law. The belief that faith is diametrically opposed to law has been mistakenly accepted as a fundamental teaching of the New Testament. But the apostle Paul shows that this view of law and faith is a complete fallacy.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul states most emphatically that true Christian faith does not oppose or eliminate the law of God, but upholds and establishes it: "Are we, then, **abolishing law through faith**? MAY IT NEVER BE! Rather, **we are establishing law**" (Rom. 3:31). Why is that so? Through faith, a Christian is able to keep the commandments and laws of God from the heart, which goes far beyond the letter of the law. Faith in Jesus Christ does not nullify the laws and commandments of God but leads to a far higher standard of obedience. It leads the true believer to fulfill the spirit of the law as revealed by the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find any evidence that the laws and commandments of God were brought to an end. Contrary to popular belief, the apostle Paul did not teach that the laws and commandments of God have been abolished. This teaching, which has been proclaimed as "Pauline theology," is contradicted by the emphatic statement that we find in Paul's epistle to the Romans. Those who promote this teaching have ignored Paul's clear and direct statement and have focused on other statements in

Paul's writings which contain wording that is not so clear and can easily be misunderstood. These difficult passages have been misinterpreted and misrepresented to promote a pseudo-Christianity that professes faith in Jesus Christ while denying the need for obedience (*See Appendix Y, p. 447*). The apostle John exposes this as a false faith: "**The one who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him**. On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected [made complete]. By this *means* we know that we are in Him. Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked" (I John 2:4-6).

John shows that Christians who truly love God do not find His commandments grievous or burdensome: "By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome**" (I John 5:2-3). The love of God leads to obedience that goes far beyond the letter of the law. It leads true believers to fulfill the spirit of the law and to do what is pleasing to God the Father (I John 3:21-24). The Old Covenant required obedience only to the letter of the law. Under the New Covenant, the meaning and intent of God's law has been magnified by Jesus Christ. Christians are required to keep the commandments and laws of God, including the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts of God, according to the spirit of the law.

The teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament clearly show that the commandments of God are binding on Christians today. The laws and commandments that God delivered in Old Testament times were written and preserved for our learning. They are essential to the practice of true Christianity, and cannot be ignored in establishing Christian doctrine.

2) The second error that is undermining the true observance of the Christian Passover is the assumption that traditional teachings and practices are Scriptural. The leaders of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox churches have erred in the same manner as the leaders of Judaism, who practice their own traditions instead of the commands of God. Jesus' condemnation of the traditions of the Jews makes it clear that these practices were not the commandments of God but the commands of men (Matt. 15:9). They were accepted as the true teachings of Scripture when, in reality, they were the false teachings of the Pharisaic rabbis.

As the traditions of Judaism are based on the erroneous teachings of the rabbis, so the traditions of Protestant, Catholics and the Orthodox are based on the erroneous writings of the early church fathers. These writings are presumed to be the teachings of the apostles, but they are not. Although they contain a few apostolic teachings, most of the doctrines they present are a deceptive mixture of Scriptural truth and human philosophical error. They were written during a period of great subversion and apostasy in the early church. Even before the first writings appeared, the churches that Paul and the other apostles had raised up were beginning to be infiltrated by false apostles who professed to be representatives of Jesus Christ. As these false

apostles rose to power, they excommunicated all believers who rejected their teachings. As a result, most of the New Testament churches fell into total apostasy, forsaking the true doctrines of Jesus Christ and turning to "another gospel" and "another Jesus" (Gal. 1:6, II Cor. 11:4). It is from this false theology, which worships a false Savior, that the early Catholic church derived its teachings.

Through the centuries, the false doctrines and practices that subverted the apostolic church have been perpetuated by Roman Catholicism. They have also been perpetuated by the Orthodox and Protestant churches, which—although they separated from the Catholic Church—have retained many of its doctrines and practices.

Few professing Christians ever stop to question the traditional beliefs and practices of their chosen denomination. They are firmly convinced that their religious leaders are teaching the true doctrines of Jesus Christ. They place their faith in their minister or priest and forget that every Christian has a personal responsibility to "prove all things" by diligently searching the Scriptures (I Thess. 5:21, Acts 17:11). As a result, the vast majority of Christians today, like many early believers of the apostolic church, have been deceived into accepting a counterfeit theology— "another gospel." This false theology, inherited from the early church fathers, is the foundation not only of Catholicism but of nearly all the doctrines of mainstream Christianity today. Those who accept these doctrines are practicing a vain religion that will not lead to eternal life.

True followers of Jesus Christ will not embrace the false theology that has been passed down through Catholic tradition, nor will they adopt the rabbinical traditions of Judaism. They will faithfully practice the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles, as recorded in the New Testament.

3) The third error that has caused confusion over the observance of the Christian Passover is a gross misunderstanding of the instructions that Paul gives in I Corinthians 11. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul addresses the serious problems that had arisen in the church at Corinth. Paul was not dealing with a single heresy, but multiple heresies. In fact, he addresses one heresy after another in his attempt to turn the Corinthians from their unchristian practices. One of these wrong practices was the misobservance of the Christian Passover. In I Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul rebukes the manner in which they were observing this solemn event, and he reminds them of the instructions that Jesus Himself had given. The expressions that Paul uses in this passage of his epistle have been greatly misconstrued. In order to understand the true meaning of Paul's words, we need to examine this passage verse by verse. As we do, we will expose some major misconceptions that have led to gross misobservance of the Christian Passover in most churches of our day.

The passage begins with a strong condemnation of the practices that the Corinthians had adopted: "Now *in* this *that* I am commanding *you*, I do not praise you, because when you assemble together, it is not for the better

but for the worse. For first of all, I hear that there are divisions among you when you are assembled together in the church, and I partly believe *it*. For it is necessary that heresies be among you, so that the ones who are approved may become manifest among you" (I Cor. 11:17-19).

What a stern condemnation of the practices of the Corinthian church! Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their practices and even calls them heresies. What were these heresies?

One of the heresies that had taken root in the Corinthian church was the practice of eating the Old Testament Passover meal in conjunction with the New Testament ceremony that Jesus had instituted. This heresy is with us to this very day. Christians in a number of churches are reintroducing the Old Testament Passover meal as part of their observance, and many observe a Nisan 15 Seder meal, as do the Jews. Paul strictly forbids this practice and makes it clear that the Christian Passover does not include a meal. Paul uses strong language to stress that when believers assemble to observe the New Testament ceremony, it is NOT for the purpose of eating the Old Testament Passover supper, as Jesus did before instituting the new symbols. Notice Paul's words: "Therefore, when you assemble together in one place, **it is not to eat *the* Lord's supper!**" (I Cor. 11:20).

The word "not" is translated from the Greek negative adverb ***ouk***. Paul's use of this Greek word emphasizes the strict prohibition against eating "the Lord's Supper," which was the Old Testament Passover meal. ***Ouk*** is the strongest Greek term that Paul could use. The word ***ouk*** denotes the absolute impossibility of eating the Lord's supper. ***Ouk*** is "an objective negative adverb denying the reality of an alleged fact" (Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Paul is telling the Corinthians that **there is no such reality as eating "the Lord's supper" because Jesus never instituted this practice. Jesus did not command His followers to observe the Old Testament Passover supper. Since the Christian Passover does not include the Old Testament Passover supper, this ceremony should never be called the Lord's Supper**.

Ministers and theologians in many different churches have completely misinterpreted Paul's statement. They do not understand that Paul is referring to the Old Testament Passover meal as "the Lord's supper," and they incorrectly assume that this term is referring to the New Testament ceremony that Jesus instituted. This mistaken view of Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians has led many churches to adopt the name of the very observance that Paul was condemning!

When we understand that "the Lord's supper" refers to the Old Testament Passover meal, it is obvious that Christians should not call the New Testament ceremony by this name. Paul's words are emphatic and their meaning is clear. The Christian Passover is not "the Lord's supper." The New Testament ceremony is a very solemn occasion, not a time to enjoy food and drink.

Paul's condemnation of the believers at Corinth shows that by including a full meal, the solemnity of the observance had given way to festivity, and some Corinthians were actually getting drunk! Paul describes their unseemly conduct: "For in eating, everyone takes his own supper first; now on the one hand, someone goes hungry; but on the other hand, another becomes drunk" (I Cor. 11:21).

What a sorry state of affairs this was! The Corinthians were coming together to keep the Christian Passover, but they were bringing their supper and calling this event "the Lord's supper." Those who had an abundance of food were selfishly consuming it while others, who had little or no food, were going hungry. Worse yet, some were drinking to the point of intoxication. Paul sharply rebuked them for their grievous misobservance of this solemn occasion: "What! Don't you have houses for eating and drinking? Or do you despise the church of God, and put to shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? **I DO NOT PRAISE YOU!**" (verse 22).

To put an end to their practice of eating supper at the Christian Passover, Paul commanded them to eat at home before they assembled for the New Testament ceremony: "So then, my brethren, when you assemble together to eat *the bread and drink the cup*, wait for one another. **But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home**, so that *there will be* no *cause* for judgment when you assemble together." (verses 33-34).

Paul's words in this passage make it absolutely clear that they were practicing heresy! It is heresy to eat a meal at the Christian Passover. This ceremony is not "the Lord's supper." Paul vehemently denounces the practice of eating the Old Testament Passover meal in conjunction with the Christian Passover. The Old Testament Passover, which was instituted to commemorate the Lord's passing over the children of Israel and sparing their firstborn, was only a foretype of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When the Christian Passover was instituted, the Old Testament Passover became obsolete.

As the Passover Lamb of the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled the sacrifice of the paschal lamb and all the sacrifices for sin that were ordained in the Old Testament. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the true Lamb of God has superseded the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. At His last Passover, Jesus replaced the sacrifice of the lamb with the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine. The paschal meal of lamb and bitter herbs was changed by Jesus Christ Himself. However, the time for observing the Passover was not changed. The accounts in the New Testament show that Jesus instituted the Christian Passover on the 14th day of the first month according to the Hebrew Calculated Calendar—the same day that the Old Testament Passover was observed.

There were some in the Corinthian church who apparently did not understand that the paschal meal was no longer necessary. They thought they should eat the Old Testament Passover before partaking of the New Testament symbols. This is the practice that Paul was combating and

calling heresy. In order to set things straight, Paul appealed to the teachings that he had received directly from the Lord. There is no higher authority for observing the Christian Passover than the personal instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had received these instructions by direct revelation during the years that he spent in Arabia (Gal. 1:11-12, 17). This fact is evident in the words that Paul writes to the Corinthians, reminding them of the teachings that he had previously delivered to them: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you; that the Lord Jesus **in the night in which He was betrayed** took bread; and after giving thanks, He broke *it* and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body, which is being broken for you. This do in **the remembrance of Me**' In like manner, *He* also *took* the cup after He had supped [after completing the Old Testament Passover meal], saying, 'This is *the* cup *of* the New Covenant in My blood. This do, **as often as** you drink *it*, in the remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you *solemnly* proclaim [by this act] the death of the Lord until He comes" (I Cor. 11:23-26).

The believers at Corinth had received the teachings of Jesus Christ from the apostle Paul, but they had chosen to add to them. In so doing, they were partaking of the Christian Passover in an unworthy manner and were bringing judgment upon themselves. It is clear that the Corinthians were sinning in their improper observance of the New Testament ceremony. The apostle James declared, "Therefore, *if* anyone knows to do good and does not do *it*, TO HIM IT IS SIN" (Jas. 4:17).

The observance of the Christian Passover is not a matter of individual preference or church practice—it is a matter of obeying the commands of Jesus Christ! To disobey His commands is SIN, which leads to eternal death!

The commands that Jesus Christ delivered to His apostles are recorded in the pages of the New Testament. These commands are worded quite clearly in the four Gospel accounts, but the instructions that we find in Paul's epistles to the Corinthians contain some expressions that are easily misinterpreted. To determine the true meaning of these expressions, we must understand the rules that govern their use in the Greek text.

Understanding the Expressions In the Greek Text

Much confusion has arisen over the expressions "as often as" and "in the remembrance of," which are both used by Paul in I Corinthians 11. These expressions have been greatly misinterpreted due to ignorance of the Greek text. The apostle Peter warns that attempting to interpret Paul's writings without proper knowledge can lead to a distorted view of the Scriptures: "...as our beloved brother Paul...has also written to you...in which are some things *that are* difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable are twisting *and distorting*... to their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15-16).

Peter's warning is especially applicable to the Passover instructions that Paul relates in I Corinthians 11. Most people interpret the expressions that Paul uses as allowing any number of times in the year for eating the

bread and drinking the wine. Is that the meaning of these expressions? Or are there limiting factors and conditions which govern their meaning?

A study of the Greek text will show that there are indeed factors and conditions that limit the time and frequency of partaking of the bread and the wine. By applying the rules of Greek grammar, we can determine the true meaning of the phrases "**as often as**" and "**in the remembrance of**." As we have done with other Scriptures that are difficult to interpret, we will carefully examine all essential factors in order to fully understand the meaning of these expressions.

"**As often as**": Does this expression mean that it is permissible to partake of the bread and the wine as often as one desires? If that were the meaning, a person could take it every five minutes, which would add up to twelve times an hour. If one did so for eight hours, one could take it nearly one hundred times in a day. Obviously, that would be excessive. In fact, it would be ridiculous and vain. Jesus warned that participating in vain, repetitious religious practices is completely unacceptable to God (Matt. 6:7). His condemnation of vain repetition shows that there are limiting factors which govern the frequency of taking the New Testament symbols.

Is it acceptable to partake of the symbols once a day? Does the expression "as often as" sanction celebrating Communion or Mass on a daily basis? When we examine the Scriptural context of this expression, we find no mention of a daily observance, yet there are devout Catholic and Orthodox believers who follow this ritual. Certainly, as head of the Roman Catholic Church, the pope does. Other churches also believe that this expression supports a weekly observance. They assume that the assembling that Paul speaks of is referring to weekly church services and that the bread and the wine should be taken at each service. However, there is nothing in the Greek text to substantiate a weekly observance of the New Testament ceremony.

The Orthodox and Catholics believe that Scriptural references to "breaking bread" are referring to taking Communion or celebrating the Mass, and Protestants believe that this expression refers to the Lord's Supper. Passages in the book of Acts are frequently quoted in an attempt to substantiate these claims (see Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7-11). When these passages are closely examined, it is clear that the term "to break bread" refers simply to eating a meal. This expression was commonly used in New Testament times in reference to partaking of food. In fact, the same terminology is used by Matthew in his account of the feeding of the 5,000. Matthew records that Jesus "blessed *them* [the loaves and the fish]; and He **broke the loaves**, and gave *them* to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude" (Matt. 14:19). The same phrase is also used in the account of the feeding of the 4,000 (Mat. 15:36). Certainly the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 with loaves and fishes was not a celebration of Communion or "the Lord's Supper." When the miraculous feeding of these multitudes took place, the New Covenant ceremony had not yet been instituted!

There is no Scriptural support for the claim that "to assemble together" or to "break bread" refers to taking the New Covenant symbols every week, nor is there any authority in the Scriptures for churches to set their own times for this observance. This practice shows a complete lack of understanding of the terms that are found in the New Testament.

The expression that has caused the greatest confusion is the phrase "**as often as**." This phrase is translated from the Greek word *osakis*, which comes from the root *osos*. *Osos* means "as great, how great; as far, how far; as long, how long; as much, how much" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Although the meaning of the word *osos* itself is very broad, in every passage where *osakis* is used, there is **a conditional or specific qualifier** which defines its limit. *Osakis* is used three times in the New Testament—twice in I Corinthians 11 and once in Revelation 11. Let us first examine its use in Revelation 11:6: "These [the two witnesses] have authority to shut heaven so that no rain may fall in *the* days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters, to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, **as often as** [***osakis***] **they will**". The limiting factor which qualifies the use of *osakis* in this verse is "they will." The meaning of *osakis* in this verse is limited only by the will of the two witnesses. They are free to smite the earth "as often as" they choose. However, we do not find this broad application of *osakis* in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians.

When we examine the context in which the word *osakis* is used in I Corinthians 11, we find a number of conditional factors that limit its meaning. The Greek text contains a major limiting factor that is not shown in the English translation. This limiting factor is **an untranslated particle** between "as often as" and "you drink," and also between "as often as" and "you eat." In the Greek text, these expressions read as follows: *osakis an pineete*, which is translated "for as often as you drink"; and *osakis an esthieete*, which is translated "as often as you eat." The word ***an*** is the untranslated Greek particle. (*Please note*: This spelling is found in the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* by Berry, which footnotes *an* with the alternative reading of *ean*. In other Greek texts, such as those of the United Bible Societies, the particle *an* is replaced by the conjunction *ean*, which has nearly the same meaning as *an*. (See Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.*) It would be most helpful for the reader to obtain a Greek interlinear of the New Testament and to see the actual Greek words with the English translation below each line. The reader will be able to observe that although ***an*** or ***ean*** appears in the Greek text, there is no corresponding word in the English. Here is the definition of the Greek particle ***an***: "A particle peculiar to Greek, incapable of translation by a single English word; it denotes that **the action of the verb is dependent on some circumstance or condition**; the effect of ***an*** upon the meaning of the clause depends on the mood and tense of the verb with which it is used" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

The Greek particle ***an*** is used to denote that conditions apply to the circumstances being related. The use of ***an*** with "you eat" and "you drink"

in Paul's instructions to the Corinthians shows that there are conditions governing these actions. But because ***an*** expresses conditions, it cannot be translated into a single English word. The only way to translate its meaning is to explain the conditions. Since it is not the responsibility of translators to comment on the text, an is simply omitted from the English translation.

An is used three times in I Corinthians 11. Its use with the actions "you eat" and "you drink" shows that both of these actions are subject to conditions. ***An*** is also used with the action "He comes," in reference to Christ's return, showing that this future action is dependent on specific conditions and circumstances, which are revealed elsewhere in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Paul's use of ***an*** in I Corinthians 11 is important because it tells us that there are conditions and circumstances that have a direct bearing on what he has written. These qualifying factors are clearly stated by Paul and are not difficult to find. **Here are the contextual limiting factors and conditional qualifiers in I Corinthians 11 which restrict the meaning of *osakis*, or "as often as"**:

1) The teachings that the apostle Paul **received from the Lord** (verse 23). This conditional qualifier restricts the observance to the specific teachings which Paul received directly from the Lord. In other words, no other teaching is to be followed.

2) The time specified by Paul as "**THE NIGHT in which He was betrayed**" (verse 23). This limiting factor allows no other time for the observance than the night of Jesus' betrayal. The fact that "the night in which He was betrayed" was the **PASSOVER NIGHT** limits its observance to the 14th day of the first month in the Calculated Hebrew calendar. The Passover was instituted as an annual memorial feast (Ex. 12:14). Its observance was restricted to that one day of the year, with the special exception of Numbers 9.

3) The statement that by observing this ceremony, "**you solemnly proclaim the Lord's death**." This clause clearly limits the observance to the day that Jesus died. That day was the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month. His death can only be memorialized or "proclaimed" on that day.

4) The phrase "**until He comes**" defines the span of time during which the annual Christian Passover is to be observed—until He returns to earth to establish the kingdom of God. At the time that Paul wrote these words, he apparently believed that Jesus' return was very near (I Cor. 7:29-31; 15:51-52). It was only later that Paul understood that His return would be in the distant future. Christians are commanded to observe the New Covenant ceremony every year until Jesus Christ returns.

The four factors that are listed above are conditional qualifiers which restrict the application of the phrase "as often as." These factors clearly

show that this expression does not allow the observance of the Christian Passover at any time one may choose. The limiting factors that are found in I Corinthians make it clear that the symbols of the bread and the wine are to be taken only once a year, on the Passover night, the 14th day of the first month. That is the night in which Jesus was betrayed.

A Memorial of Jesus' Death

In addition to the limiting factors that Paul gives in his epistle to the Corinthians, we have the direct command of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Luke. The words that Jesus spoke when He instituted the Christian Passover show that this ceremony is a memorial of His death: "And He took bread; *and* after giving thanks, He broke *it* and gave *it* to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. **This do in the remembrance of Me**' In like manner also, *He* took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup *is* the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you' " (Luke 22:19-20).

Jesus commands His followers to partake of the symbols of His body and His blood "**in the remembrance of Me**." The words "the remembrance" are translated from the Greek phrase *tees anamnesis*, which means "the remembrance, reminder, memorial" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). This Greek phrase occurs only four times in the New Testament. It is used three times in reference to observing the Christian Passover as a memorial of Jesus' death (Luke 22:19; I Cor. 11:24, 25), and once in reference to the animal sacrifices that were offered each year on the Day of Atonement: "In *offering* these *sacrifices* year by year, *there is* a **remembrance** of sins" (Heb. 10:3).

In Hebrews 10, the word "**remembrance**" is referring to an annual event that was not a memorial. However, in Luke 22:19 and in I Corinthians 11:24 and 25, the Greek text is specifically referring to a memorial observance. In these three verses, which contain instructions for observing the Christian Passover, the definite article "the" is used with "remembrance." The use of the definite article "the" leaves no room to question the meaning of the word "remembrance." The presence of the definite article makes it absolutely clear that the Passover is to be observed once a year as a memorial of Jesus' death, just as the Old Testament Passover was observed once a year as a memorial of the sparing of Israel's firstborn.

As we have seen, even in Hebrews 10:3, where the word "remembrance" is used without the definite article, it is still referring to an annual observance—the Day of Atonement. Each year on that day, animal sacrifices were offered to atone for the sins of the people. In every occurrence in the New Testament, the word "**remembrance**" is used in reference to an annual event. The word "remembrance," as used in the Scriptures, in no way supports the daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or semi-annual services of the Lord's Supper, Mass, Communion or the Eucharist. These traditional practices, which are observed by millions of professing Christians

today, do not conform to the commands of Jesus Christ. Jesus' personal instructions, as recorded in the New Testament, clearly restrict the taking of the bread and the wine to the night of His betrayal, which occurred on the Passover day. **Christians are commanded to partake of the New Covenant symbols only once a year on the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month, at the time that Jesus instituted them, "in the night He was betrayed**."

Should the Passover Be Observed At the Time of Jesus' Death?

Some professing Christians who understand that the Passover should be observed on the 14th day of the first month have decided to observe it in the afternoon, at the time that Jesus died. Because the Gospels record that Jesus died at "about the ninth hour" (Matt. 27:46), which is about 3 PM, they feel that the Passover ceremony should take place at that time. To support their belief, they point to Paul's words in I Corinthians 11:26. In this verse, Paul states that those who observe the Christian Passover "are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes."

Does "proclaiming the Lord's death" mean observing the Christian Passover at the time that Jesus died? When we examine the context of Paul's statement, we find no indication that this expression refers to observing the New Testament ceremony in the afternoon. In fact, before making this statement, Paul reminds the Corinthians of Jesus' command to observe the ceremony "**in the night** He was betrayed" (verse 23). This was one of the ordinances that Paul had delivered to the Corinthians (verse 1). Although they had inappropriately modified the ceremony by adding a meal, they had been keeping it at the commanded time. Their erroneous practice of eating "the Lord's supper" shows that they were not observing the ceremony in the afternoon, but on the night of the 14th, at the time that Jesus observed it with His disciples.

There is no Scriptural evidence to support the assertion that "proclaiming the Lord's death" means to observe the Christian Passover at the time of Jesus' death. **Paul makes no reference to an afternoon observance of the Christian Passover, nor is there any record of the ceremony ever being observed by the early Christians at that time of day**.

If Christians were required to observe the Passover at the time that Jesus died, Paul would have revealed this fact to the Corinthians. Such a dramatic change in the timing of the New Testament ceremony would be recorded in his instructions in I Corinthians 11. However, Paul's instructions do not include any such statement. **Nowhere in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians—or any other book in the New Testament—is there any indication that Christians should commemorate Jesus' death at any other time than "the night He was betrayed." That is when Jesus instituted the New Testament ceremony, and that is the time that Christians are commanded to observe it**. On that night, Jesus gave this command for partaking of the bread and the wine: "**This do** in the remembrance of Me." Jesus' command, "**THIS DO**!" shows that His followers are to follow the

procedures that He Himself instituted, observing the ceremony in the same manner and at the same time.

It is completely erroneous to interpret the phrase "proclaiming the Lord's death" as justification for observing the Christian Passover at the time of day that Christ died. The death of Jesus Christ can only be commemorated, or "proclaimed," by observing the New Covenant ceremony at the time that Jesus commanded. The instructions of Jesus Christ as recorded by the apostle Paul clearly show that the Christian Passover should be observed at the time that Jesus instituted it, which was "the night in which He was betrayed." That is the commanded time to partake of the symbols of His body and His blood.

Is It Acceptable to Add to the Observance of the Christian Passover?

Some who recognize that the Christian Passover is an annual observance believe that it is acceptable to partake of the New Covenant symbols at additional times during the year. Samuele Bacchiocchi supports this view and maintains that this practice was followed by the early Christian churches. He states the following: "**Passover and the Lord's Supper**. The meaning and ritual of the Christian Passover was similar to that of **the Lord's Supper observed during the course of the year** [in addition to the annual observance on the 14th of Nisan]. The main difference...is that during the course of the year the Lord's Supper was celebrated as part of a religious service, while at Passover [Nisan 14] the Lord's Supper was the main part of the service, being celebrated as the climax of an all-night vigil of fasting [a Catholic and Orthodox practice]" (*God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, p. 74, emphasis added).

Like most theologians of today, Bacchiocchi has totally misinterpreted Paul's statements in I Corinthians 11. He does not understand that "the Lord's supper" refers to the Old Testament Passover meal, which the Corinthians had wrongfully observed with their annual observance of the Christian Passover. Because he has not carefully studied the Scriptures, he mistakenly interprets "the Lord's supper" as a New Testament practice that the early Christians were observing "during the course of the year" and uses this false interpretation to justify the current false practice of periodically including a substitute of the New Covenant ceremony at weekly worship services. Notice: "One could wish to know how Paul related the Passover Supper with the Lord's Supper discussed in 1 Corinthians 11. Undoubtedly, both constituted for him a proclamation of the Lord's death 'until he comes' (I Cor. 11:26). It is clear, however, that for Paul **the memorial of Christ's death is to be observed not only once a year at Passover but 'as often as' the Lord's Supper is celebrated** (I Cor. 11:26). The phrase 'as often as' suggests that the Apostolic Church sensed the need to celebrate their new Passover more frequently than once a year. The fundamental importance attached to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus made it imperative for the primitive church to celebrate the memorial of His death not annually at Passover but periodically during the course of the year" (Ibid., p. 75, emphasis added).

In addition to observing the Lord's Supper, Bacchiocchi promotes the unscriptural practice of observing an agape meal in conjunction with the New Testament ceremony: "Evening Lord's Supper and Agape Meal. The first option is to begin the passover vigil with **an evening celebration of the Lord's Supper and an *agape* meal** [at dawn of Nisan 15]" (Ibid., p. 150, emphasis added).

Bacchiocchi errs in his view of I Corinthians 11 because he relies on the traditions of men—not on the teachings that Jesus delivered to His apostles. Notice how he uses the interpretations of men to justify observing the "Lord's Supper": "In his classic W. D. Davies also notes a possible connection in I Corinthians between the Passover and the Lord's Supper" (Ibid., p. 75). This statement promotes the false belief that Paul's words to the Corinthians support the observance of the Lord's Supper. What a gross distortion of the words of the apostle Paul! As we have seen, Paul's reference to "the Lord's supper" shows his rejection of this practice and every other practice that goes beyond the express commands of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures do not support such practices.

The influence of these unscriptural practices is clearly evident in Bacchiocchi's writing. In addition to supporting the Lord's Supper and *agape* meals, he promotes the view of the New Testament ceremony as "the Eucharist." He quotes W. D. Davies' study on *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, which uses this terminology: "He [Davies] writes: 'It seems a justifiable assumption that 1 Corinthians was written before the Passover season and it is natural that the Passover ritual should be in the forefront of Paul's thought, and there is considerable evidence that this was so. Thus in 1 Corinthians 15:23, Christ is called the first-fruits, an element in the Passover ritual, and there is a more specific reference still of course in 1 Corinthians 5:7. Perhaps it is strictly incorrect to claim that **Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7 is thinking of the Eucharist** [the bread and wine] **as the Christian equivalent of Jewish Passover**. Nevertheless, we believe that Paschal ideas dominate his view of the Eucharist. We have previously pointed out that the thought of Christianity as a New Exodus, with its New Torah, was constantly in Paul's mind and it is fully consonant with this that the Last Supper should be regarded by him as the inauguration of the New Covenant' " (Ibid.).

There is no Scriptural connection between the Christian Passover and the Catholic Eucharist, neither in the time of observance nor in the manner of observance. If we rely on the teachings of the New Testament, we will recognize that the Eucharist, like the Lord's Supper, is wholly unacceptable to Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul's statements in I Corinthians 11 show that Christians are absolutely forbidden to adopt practices that do not conform to the commands of Jesus Christ. When we apply the principle that Paul has laid down in his epistle, it is clear that Christians are to observe the New Covenant ceremony exactly as Jesus commanded—neither adding to His commands nor omitting from them. Any other practice is a tradition of men and has no Scriptural authority whatsoever.

Warning Against Eating the Passover Unworthily

In rebuking the Corinthian believers for adding to the commands of Jesus Christ, Paul warned them of the dire consequences of eating and drinking the new symbols unworthily: "For this reason, *if* anyone shall eat this bread or shall drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, he **shall be guilty of the body and *the* blood of the Lord**. But let a man examine himself, and let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup accordingly. Because the one who eats and drinks unworthily is eating and drinking judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord. For this *very* reason, many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many have fallen asleep [are dead]. For if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by *the* Lord, so that we will not be condemned with the world. So then, my brethren, when you assemble together to eat *the bread and drink the cup*, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that *there will be* no *cause* for judgment *when* you assemble together" (I Cor. 11:27-34).

The words that Paul wrote to the Corinthians reveal what it means to partake of the New Testament symbols unworthily.

Unworthiness includes the following:
1) an improper manner, improper symbols, and an incorrect day and time
2) an improper attitude of rebellion or habitual, calloused sinfulness
3) not discerning the body of Jesus Christ for healing
4) not discerning the blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins

Worthiness includes the following:
1) the proper manner, proper symbols, and the correct day and time
2) a humble, loving, repentant, yielded attitude
3) discerning the body of the Lord and trusting Him for healing
4) discerning the blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins

Much of the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians is devoted to correcting the believers in the Corinthian church for their improper observance of the Christian Passover and exhorting them to follow the commands of Jesus Christ as they had previously been taught. Paul reminds them that the time and manner for observing the Christian Passover were instituted by Jesus Himself on the night in which He was betrayed. Christians who truly love God and desire to do what is pleasing to Him will keep the Christian Passover at the time and in the manner that Jesus commanded.

Changes in the Old Testament Passover Ordinances

The time that God ordained for observing the Passover—in both the Old Testament and the New Testament—is the 14th day of Nisan, the first

month in the calculated Hebrew calendar. This day was ordained in the beginning, and it has not changed. However, when we compare the Old Testament teachings with the New Testament teachings, we find that the physical requirements of the Old Covenant have been replaced by the spiritual requirements of the New Covenant. It is a basic principle of Scripture that the physical comes first, then the spiritual. The apostle Paul wrote: "However, the spiritual was not first, but the natural [or physical]—then the spiritual" (I Cor. 15:46).

The Passover of the Old Covenant, which came first, was based on obedience to the physical requirements of the law. Here is a summary of the ordinances of the Old Covenant Passover:

1) Sacrifice a lamb or kid.
2) Put the blood of lamb on door posts and lintel of the house.
3) All males were required to be circumcised before participating.
4) No uncircumcised male was allowed to eat the Passover.
5) Roast the lamb and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread on the night of the 14th.
6) Carry none of the flesh out of the house.
7) Break no bones of the lamb or kid.
8) Burn all remains by morning.
9) Observe the Passover only in the land of the covenant. No one was allowed to eat the Passover when on a journey in another country or when unclean by reason of touching a dead body.

Unlike the Passover of the Old Covenant, the Passover of the New Covenant requires spiritual obedience and offers the promise of eternal life. The ordinances of the New Covenant Passover are spiritual in nature and meaning. Here is a summary of those ordinances:

1) Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God—the true Passover sacrifice.
2) The blood of Jesus Christ—the blood of the New Covenant—is applied to each believer for the forgiveness of sins.
3) Before participating, each believer must be baptized into the death of Jesus Christ by full immersion in water.
4) All participants, male and female, must be spiritually circumcised in the heart by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God the Father.
5) All must participate in the footwashing, which symbolizes the renewal of the baptismal covenant pledge to walk in Christ Jesus.
6) All must partake of the unleavened bread, which symbolizes the broken body of Jesus Christ for healing of sicknesses.
7) All must partake of the wine, which symbolizes the blood of Jesus Christ—the blood of the New Covenant—for the forgiveness of sins.

8) All must live by the commandments of Jesus Christ, as symbolized by eating the unleavened bread and drinking the wine.
9) All baptized believers may partake of the Christian Passover in the country where they live.

Many Christians understand that the Passover of the New Covenant was preceded by the Passover of the Old Covenant, but they do not realize that both observances were founded on the promises that God gave to Abraham when He established His covenant with him. In the next chapter, we will examine the original foundation of the Passover as revealed in the book of Genesis.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM— THE FOUNDATION OF THE PASSOVER

Very few understand that the Passover of the Old Covenant and the Passover of the New Covenant are both founded on the promises of the covenant that God made with Abraham. These promises are dual in nature, having both a physical fulfillment and a spiritual fulfillment. In this chapter, we will examine God's covenant with Abraham, and we will learn how God began to fulfill His promises to Abraham through the Passover, the Exodus and the establishment of the Old Covenant with the children of Israel. As we will see, the timing of these events was planned by God more than four hundred years in advance.

God Promises to Bless Abraham

The first promises that God gave to Abraham are recorded in Genesis 12. Notice that these promises were accompanied by a specific command: "And the LORD said to Abram: **'Get out of your country, and from your kindred**, and from your father's house, **into a land that I will show you**. And I will make *of* you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing. And I will bless those that bless you and curse the one who curses you. **And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed**' " (verses 1-3).

Abram, who was later named Abraham, was required to fulfill the conditions that God had laid down in order to receive these promises. The Scriptures record that Abraham obeyed God and departed from his kindred, who were dwelling in the city of Haran: "Then Abram departed, even as the LORD had spoken to him. And Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran" (verse 4). Abraham obeyed God in faith that He would fulfill the promises that He had given to him. These promises formed the basis for the covenants that God established with Abraham and his descendants.

The Four Promises of the Covenant

Ten years after making these promises, God again appeared to Abraham. At this time, God gave Abraham additional promises, which He confirmed by establishing a covenant. In Genesis 15, we find a detailed account of the covenant that God made with Abraham. This covenant is the foundation of the Old Covenant, which was established with the physical seed of Abraham, and of the New Covenant, which is established with the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Many who read the account in Genesis 15 see only the physical aspects of God's covenant with Abraham. They look upon this covenant strictly as a national covenant and believe that it was established exclusively

for the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac. As we examine the Scriptural account of this covenant, we will see that it applies not only to the physical seed of Abraham but also to those who become the spiritual seed of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ.

The account begins with God's promise that a son would be born to Abraham: "After these things the Word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram, I *am* your shield and your exceedingly great reward.' And Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what will You give me since I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Behold, You have given no seed to me; and lo, one born in my house is my heir.'

"And behold, the Word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, 'This man shall not be your heir; but **he that shall come forth out of your own loins shall be your heir**' " (Gen. 15:1-4). This promise was fulfilled first by the birth of Isaac and later by the birth of Jesus Christ, Who was a descendant of Isaac's grandson Judah. The New Testament reveals that Jesus Christ is the true Seed of Abraham and the Heir of the promises: "Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises spoken. He does not say, 'and to *your* seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'and to your Seed,' which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

God's promise to give Abraham a son was followed by a second promise. The words that God spoke reveal that the promises were given after the sun had set and the darkness of night had come. Notice: "And He brought outside and said, '**Look now toward the heavens and number the stars—if you are able to count them**.' And He said to him, '**So shall your seed be**' " (verse 5). As the New Testament shows, these words of God do not refer to Abraham's physical descendants but to those who would become the spiritual children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ: "Because of this, *you should* understand that those who *are* of faith are the *true* sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). The true children of Abraham are not counted by their physical lineage. They are a spiritual nation, composed of individuals of every race and every bloodline who follow in the faith of Abraham (verses 8, 14). At the return of Jesus Christ, they will be resurrected to eternal life as glorified spirit beings and will shine as the stars forever (Dan. 12:3, Mat. 13:43, I Cor. 15:40-44).

The account in Genesis 15 shows that Abraham received the promises with complete faith that God would fulfill them: "**And he believed in the LORD. And He accounted it to him for righteousness**. And He said to him, 'I *am* the LORD that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it.' " (verses 6-7).

When we understand the full significance of the Scriptural account, it is clear that there are four specific promises:

1) promise of physical seed
2) promise of spiritual seed
3) promise of physical land
4) promise of spiritual kingdom of God

The first promise was fulfilled through the birth of Abraham's son Isaac, and the second promise through the birth of Jesus Christ. The third promise was fulfilled through the covenant that God established with the physical nation of Israel, called the Old Covenant. The fourth promise is being fulfilled through the New Covenant, which Jesus Christ has established with His Church.

The Promises Lead to Righteousness Through Faith

The Scriptures clearly record that when Abraham received the promises, "he believed in the LORD. And He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). It is important to understand that when God imputed this righteousness to Abraham, He did not require him to be circumcised. Abraham was not circumcised until fourteen years after he had received the promises. God gave Abraham the promises before he was circumcised so that he would become the father not only of the physical seed but also of the spiritual seed. The physical seed would receive their inheritance in the Promised Land through the circumcision of the flesh and obedience to the requirements of the law. The spiritual seed would receive an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of God through faith and the circumcision of the heart.

In His great love and mercy, God did not limit His promises to the physical descendants of Abraham but made provision for all nations to receive them—not through circumcision and the works of law, but through the righteousness of faith. Through faith, Abraham was counted righteous in his uncircumcision. In imputing this righteousness to Abraham, God planned for the time when He would establish the New Covenant through Jesus Christ, which would enable the Gentiles to be justified by faith without the requirement of physical circumcision. The words of Paul clearly show that justification comes through faith and not through the circumcision of the flesh: "What then shall we say *that* our father Abraham has found with respect to *the* flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has a basis for boasting, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness'.... Now then, *does* this blessedness *come* upon the circumcision *only*, or also upon the uncircumcision? For we are saying that faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. **In what condition therefore was it imputed? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision**" (Rom. 4:1-3, 9-10).

Abraham was justified by faith and lived in righteousness before God for fourteen years before he was circumcised. When he was ninety-nine years old, he received the command to be circumcised. The circumcision of his flesh was a token of the covenant that God had made with him and an outward sign of his faith that God would fulfill the promises. Because Abraham's faith preceded his circumcision, he became the father of all who believe, both of the circumcision and of the uncircumcision: "And *afterwards* he received *the* sign of circumcision, *as* a seal of the righteousness of the faith that *he had* in the *condition of* uncircumcision, that he

might become *the* father of all those who believe, though they have not been circumcised, in order that the righteousness *of faith* might also be imputed to them; And *that he* might become *the* father of *the* circumcision—not to those who are of the circumcision only, but also to those who walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had during *his* uncircumcision....**For this reason *it is* of faith, in order that *it might be* by grace, to the end that the promise might be certain to all the seed—not to the one who is of the law only, but also to the one who is of *the* faith of Abraham, who is *the* father of us all**" (Rom. 4:11-12, 16).

The righteousness that was imputed to Abraham while he was in uncircumcision laid the foundation for salvation through the New Covenant. The writings of Paul clearly show that those who enter the New Covenant through faith in Jesus Christ do not have to be physically circumcised in order to be justified from their sins and receive salvation. Rather, they are spiritually circumcised through the circumcision of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:11). Through the circumcision of the heart, they become partakers of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and are counted worthy to enter the New Covenant and to participate in its renewal each year at the Christian Passover.

The New Testament makes it absolutely clear that righteousness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, the promised seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16, 22). Born of the tribe of Judah, He was a physical descendant of Abraham. Resurrected and glorified, He became the first spiritual descendant of Abraham. According to God's promise, an innumerable number of spiritual descendants will be added during the fulfillment and completion of His plan. As the children of Abraham through faith, they will be granted an inheritance in the kingdom of God, sharing His glory and shining like the stars forever (Dan 12).

The Promises Are Confirmed by a Covenant

Abraham had been sojourning in the land of Canaan for ten years when he received the promises. Although he believed God, he wanted to know how and when God would fulfill His promises: "And he said: 'O Lord GOD, by what shall I know that I shall inherit it?' " (Gen 15:8.) The next morning God spoke to him and instructed him to prepare a sacrifice. This was a special sacrifice by which God would establish a unilateral covenant with Abraham. Because God would ratify His promises by passing through the middle of this sacrifice, it was necessary to split the animals from head to tail and make a path between the two halves: "And He said to him, 'Take Me a heifer of three years old, a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' And he took all these to himself, and divided them in the middle, and laid each piece opposite the other; but he did not divide the birds" (Gen. 15:9-10).

This was a unique sacrifice, totally different from the sacrifices that God later gave to Israel for the tabernacle offerings. This sacrifice had no altar, no wood, and no coals to set the wood on fire. Instead, Abraham was required to split the animals down the middle and lay them on the ground,

placing the two halves of each animal beside each other with a path between. This sacrifice was prepared in accordance with the requirements of covenantal law.

The Covenant Sacrifice Was a Maledictory Oath

According to covenantal law, a covenant does not become valid until it has been sealed with a blood sacrifice. The bloody carcasses of the sacrificial animals represent the symbolic death of the one confirming the covenant. By passing between these carcasses, the one who is ratifying the covenant is swearing by an oath that if he fails to perform the terms of the covenant, he will die, and his blood will be spilled on the ground in the same manner as the animals of the covenant sacrifice. Once ratified by this maledictory oath, the terms of the covenant cannot be changed—neither by adding to them nor by diminishing from them.

In the book of Jeremiah, we find an example of the binding power of a covenant that has been ratified by a maledictory oath. When the men of Judah broke the covenant they had made to free their servants who were fellow Jews, the maledictory oath was enforced by God. Let us examine this account: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after king Zedekiah had **made a covenant with all the people** at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty to them, that each man should let his male slave, and each man his female slave—*if* a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman—go free, that none should enslave a Jew, his brother among them. And all the rulers obeyed, and **all the people who had entered into the covenant** allowed them to go free, each man his male slave, and each man his female slave, so that not any should be enslaved among them any more; and they obeyed and let *them* go. **But afterwards they turned** [went back on their word] and **took back** the male slaves and the female slaves whom they had **set free** and enslaved them again as male slaves and female slaves" (Jer. 34:8-11).

It is clear that the people of Judah had made a covenant with God to let their fellow Hebrews slaves go free. They had agreed not to hold them in bondage. In making this covenant, they had bound themselves by a maledictory oath. By walking between the halves of the covenant sacrifice, they had pledged that if they broke the terms of the covenant, they would suffer the penalty of death.

When they turned back from this covenant by again enslaving their brethren, God sent the prophet Jeremiah to announce that the maledictory pledge they had taken was being placed into effect: "So the Word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying:…'I will give the men who **sinned against My covenant**, who have **not done the words of the covenant which they made before Me, *WHEN THEY* DIVIDED THE CALF IN TWO AND PASSED BETWEEN ITS PARTS**; the rulers of Judah, and the rulers of Jerusalem, the officials, and the priests, and all the people of the land **who passed between the parts of the calf**; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life. **And their dead bodies shall be for food to the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the earth**" (verses 12, 18-20).

This account in the book of Jeremiah shows that when a covenant has been ratified by a maledictory oath, the terms of the covenant are binding and irrevocable. The covenant by the people of Judah was binding because it had been ratified by a blood sacrifice. The people, including the princes and the priests, had pledged their lives by passing between the parts of a calf. When they broke the covenant they had made before God, He required their lives.

Unlike the covenant that Jeremiah records, the covenant that God established with Abraham did not require him to participate in a maledictory oath. When we examine the account in Genesis 15, it is clear that only God Himself passed between the parts of the sacrificial animals. Let us continue with the account.

God Enters Into Covenant With Abraham

By the time that Abraham had finished preparing the covenant sacrifice, it was late in the day. Notice: "And when the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And it came to pass, **as the sun was going down**, that a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And, behold, a horror of great darkness fell upon him! And He [God] said to Abram, 'You must surely know that your seed shall be sojourners in a land *that is* not theirs, (and shall serve them…)" (Gen. 15:11-13).

Long before the birth of Abraham's son Isaac, God revealed that the children who would be born of his lineage would be enslaved by a foreign nation. They would not receive their inheritance until long after Abraham had died: "…(and shall serve them and afflict them) four hundred years. And also I will judge that nation whom they shall serve. And afterward they shall come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come here again, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full' " (verses 13-16).

After prophesying these events, God bound Himself to fulfill them by entering into a covenant with Abraham. Notice the time setting: "And it came to pass—**when the sun went down** [beginning the next day] and it was dark—behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces" (verse 17).

After the sun had gone down, God alone passed between parts of the sacrificial animals, revealing His presence by the smoking furnace and the flaming torch. By passing between the halves, God established a unilateral covenant with Abraham and made it irrevocable. Notice: "**In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram**, saying, 'I have given this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. The *land of the* Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites and the Jebusites' " (verses 18-21).

In reading the full account in Genesis 15, it is clear that the making of the covenant took place during two consecutive days. When God first spoke to Abraham, it was night because the stars could be seen (verse 5). In the morning, God gave Abraham instructions for preparing the covenant sacrifice. Abraham prepared the sacrifice that same day. We know that he completed the preparations while the sun was still high because the birds of prey were flying about and attempting to land on the sacrifice (verse 11). The next verse records the end of the day: "And it came to pass, as the sun was going down, that a deep sleep fell upon Abram" (verse 12). After the sun had gone down, God appeared to Abraham and established the covenant (verse 18).

There is great significance in the fact that the covenant was established over a two-day period, with the promises being given on the first night and the covenant being ratified on the second night. The timing of these events has an exact parallel in the chronology of the Passover and the Exodus, which were the first acts in the fulfillment of God's promises for the physical seed—the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.

God Fulfills the Promises for the Physical Seed

God had promised Abraham that the land would be given to his descendants in the fourth generation. At that time, the descendants of Abraham numbered in the millions. They bore the name Israel, which was the name God had given to their forefather Jacob. The children of Israel were dwelling in the land of Egypt, suffering under cruel bondage as slaves. God heard their cries of anguish and sent Moses to announce that He would deliver them from the bondage of Egypt and would bring them to the Promised Land. Notice how God spoke to Moses at the burning bush: "**I *am* the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**" (Ex. 3:6).

God revealed Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the forefathers of the children of Israel—and commanded Moses to speak to the people in His name: "Go, and gather the elders of Israel and say to them, '**The LORD God of your fathers has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, saying**, "I have surely visited you and observed what is done to you in Egypt. And I have said, '**I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt** to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey' " ' " (Ex. 3:16-17).

Notice again the words that God spoke when He established the covenant: "And He [God] said to Abram, 'You must surely know that your seed shall be sojourners in a land *that is* not theirs, (and shall serve them and shall afflict them) four hundred years. And also **I will judge that nation whom they shall serve**..." (Gen. 15:13-14). This promise was fulfilled on the Passover night, the 14th day of the first month, when God executed His final judgment against Egypt: "...It *is* the LORD'S Passover, for I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the

land of Egypt, both man and beast. **And I WILL EXECUTE JUDGMENT against all the gods of Egypt. I *am* the LORD**. And the blood shall be a sign to you upon the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you* when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:11-13).

The deliverance of Israel was initiated with the killing of the Passover lambs at the beginning of the 14th day of the first month between sunset and dark. When midnight came, God executed His judgment against all the firstborn of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt. But He passed over the houses of the children of Israel, sparing their firstborn. The children of Israel were under the protection of the blood of the Passover sacrifice, which had been placed on the side posts and lintels of the doors of their houses.

Notice what God told Abraham He would do for his descendants after He had judged their oppressors: "...And **afterward shall they come out with great substance**" (Gen. 15:14). When did the children of Israel come out with great substance? The Scriptures record that they began their Exodus from Egypt on the 15th day of the first month, **the day after the Passover**. The account in the book of Exodus shows that they went out with great substance, as God had promised: "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses. And they asked for articles of silver, and articles of gold, and clothing from the Egyptians. And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, and they granted their request, and they stripped the Egyptians" (Ex. 12:35-36).

In the morning of the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month, the children of Israel left their houses and gathered great spoil from the Egyptians before assembling in Rameses for the Exodus. They departed from Rameses with their spoil, as the sun was going down, ending the 14th day and beginning the 15th. They traveled all that night under a full moon with the pillar of fire to guide them. Here is the account of their departure: "And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, the men being about six hundred thousand on foot, apart from little ones....Now the sojourning of the children of Israel in Egypt *was* **four hundred and thirty years**. And it came to pass at the end of **four hundred and thirty years, IT WAS EVEN ON THAT VERY SAME DAY, all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It *is* a night to be much observed to the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt**..." (Ex. 12:37-42).

Notice the phrase "**the very same day**." This phrase refers to **a specific day exactly four hundred and thirty years before the Exodus**. What day was this? The Scriptures reveal that it was the day that God established His covenant with Abraham. On that day, God promised that He would bring his descendants out of bondage with great substance. The words of the apostle Paul clearly link the four hundred and thirty years to God's covenant with Abraham: "Now this I say, *that the* covenant ratified beforehand by God to Christ [Abraham's true Heir] cannot be annulled by

the law [the physical requirements of the Old Covenant], which was *given* four hundred and thirty years later, so as to make the promise of no effect" (Gal. 3:17).

As Paul shows, God established His covenant with Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the Old Covenant, which He established with the children of Israel after bringing them out of Egypt. The account of their Exodus shows that they began to leave Egypt on the same day that God made the covenant with Abraham. **Four hundred and thirty years later, ON "THE VERY SAME DAY" THAT GOD COVENANTED WITH ABRAHAM, GOD BROUGHT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT.**

The Scriptures clearly pinpoint the 15th day of the first month as the day that God established His covenant with Abraham. On the 15th day of the first month, God passed between the parts of the covenant sacrifice. The promises, which were given to Abraham on the previous day, were spoken by God on the night of the 14th. In the morning of the 14th, God gave Abraham instructions for the covenant sacrifice, and Abraham prepared the animals on that same day. After the sun had set and the 15th day had begun, God walked between the parts. On the **very same day**—four hundred and thirty years later—He fulfilled this part of the covenant by bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt.

After six days of travel, they came to the Red Sea, where Pharaoh and his army came upon them. It appeared as though the Egyptians would capture the children of Israel and take them back into bondage. But God intervened with a powerful divine miracle, and the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. All the chariots, horsemen and soldiers of Pharaoh followed the children of Israel into the sea and were destroyed when God brought the waters back (Ex. 14:15-30).

After seven weeks of travel, the children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai. There God delivered the words of the Old Covenant, personally speaking the Ten Commandments in an awesome display of power from the top of Mount Sinai on the day of Pentecost (Ex. 19-20). Then He gave Moses all the statutes, judgments and ordinances of the Old Covenant (Ex. 21-23). On the day after Pentecost, the covenant was ratified by all the people and sealed with the blood of oxen: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the LORD has said we will do.'

"And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar at the base of the mountain and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel who offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of bullocks to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the **book of the covenant** [which contained all the requirements of the cove-

nant], and read in the ears of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, '**Behold the blood of the covenant**, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words' " (Ex. 24:3-8).

Notice that the Old Covenant was ratified by sprinkling the blood of the covenant sacrifice on the people. Because the number of the people was so great, God did not require them to pass between the pieces of the sacrificial animals. Unlike other covenant sacrifices, the animals were not offered on the ground, and their blood did not spill on the ground. Instead, the animals were offered on an altar made of whole stones (Ex. 20:25), and their blood was caught in basins. Half of the blood was dashed against the altar, and the other half was sprinkled on the people to ratify the covenant: "And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, '**Behold the blood of the covenant**, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words' " (Ex. 24:7-8). This sprinkling of blood made the covenant as binding as if the people had passed between the parts.

After the children of Israel had ratified the covenant, pledging to obey all of God's commandments, God led them to the Promised Land. But when they arrived, they refused to go in because they feared the people of the land. They did not believe that God was able to deliver them from their enemies. Because of this terrible sin, they were sentenced to wander for forty years in the wilderness. All those over twenty years of age died in the wilderness as punishment for their disobedience and disbelief.

At the end of the forty years, when the children of Israel were ready to enter the Promised Land, Moses reminded them of the reason that God had brought them to the land: "For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people to Himself above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you *were* the fewest of all people. But because the LORD loved you and because **He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers**, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

"Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, **the faithful God Who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him** and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations. And he repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slow to repay him who hates Him. He will repay him to his face.

"You shall therefore keep the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which I command you today to do them. And it shall come to pass, if you hearken to these judgments to keep and practice them, *then* **the LORD your God shall keep with you THE COVENANT and the mercy which HE SWORE TO YOUR FATHERS**. And He will love you and

bless you and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your land, your grain, and your wine, and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep, **in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you**" (Deut. 7:6-13).

All that God did for Israel—the covenant that He made with them and the land that He gave to them—was a fulfillment of **His unconditional promises to Abraham, which were confirmed by a covenant and passed on to Isaac and Jacob**, because Abraham believed and obeyed God.

Israel Receives the Promised Land on the Very Same Day

When God covenanted with Abraham on the 15th day of the first month, He promised to give his descendants the land where he had been sojourning. Notice: "**In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram**, saying: '**I have given this land to your seed**, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the *land of the* Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites' " (Gen. 15:18-21).

God fulfilled this promise on the **very same day** that He had established the covenant. The Scriptures record that the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land before keeping the Passover on the 14th day of the first month. On the following day, the 15th day of the first month, they officially took possession of the land by eating of the harvest. Here is the account in the book of Joshua: "And the children of Israel camped in Gilgal and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening [immediately after sunset of the 13th] in the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the old grain of the land on the next day after the Passover [on the 15th day of the first month, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread], unleavened cakes and roasted *new* grain, **in the same day**" (Josh. 5:10-11). *For a technical exegesis of these verses, see Appendix O.*

The fact that the children of Israel began to eat the produce of the land shows that they had officially received the land as their inheritance. During their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, God had sustained them with manna from heaven. They had harvested neither grain for bread, nor grapes for wine. When they arrived at the Promised Land, Moses delivered these words from the mouth of God: "And I have led you **forty years** in the wilderness. Your clothes have not become old on you, and your shoe has not become old on your foot. **You have not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine or strong drink, so that you might know that I *am* the LORD your God**" (Deut. 29:5-6).

The forty years of wandering, which began with the Exodus from Egypt on the 15th day of the first month, ended on "the very same day" when the children of Israel ate of the harvest of the Promised Land. Because they had received their inheritance, they no longer needed manna to

sustain them: "And the manna stopped on the next day after they had eaten the grain of the land. And there was no more manna for the children of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (Josh. 5:12).

Although the children of Israel had entered the Promised Land on the 10th day of the month, they were forbidden to eat any grain that grew in the land until they had fulfilled God's command for the wave sheaf offering. Notice: "**When you have come into the land which I give to you**, and shall reap the harvest of it, then you shall bring *the premier* sheaf of the first -fruits of your harvest to the priest....**And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain, nor green ears until the SAME DAY, until you have brought the offering to your God** [the first sheaf of the first-fruits, which was waved during the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the day after the weekly Sabbath]" (Lev. 23:10, 14).

God specifically commanded the children of Israel not to eat any bread or any grain—neither fresh nor parched—until they had brought the first sheaf of the grain harvest to the priest to be waved before Him. Since the Scriptures record that they ate of the grain of the land on "the next day after the Passover," we know that the 15th day of the first month was not only the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but was also the Wave Sheaf Day that year. That day was "**the very same day**" that the Exodus from Egypt had begun, and "**the very same day**" that God had walked between the parts of the sacrifice, guaranteeing His promise to Abraham by a covenant: "**In the same day** the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, '**I have given this land to your seed**…' " (Gen. 15:18).

God fulfills everything at His appointed time. He fulfilled the promises that He had given to Abraham in **the very same day that He had established the covenant—the 15th day of the first month**. Four hundred and thirty years later, to the very same day, the children of Israel left Egypt, beginning their journey to the Promised Land. Forty years afterwards, on the very same day, the children of Israel received the land as their inheritance.

God fulfilled His promise to give the land to Abraham's descendants of the fourth generation. In the next chapter, we will see how the promises that God made to Abraham were passed on to his descendants of all generations.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

GOD COVENANTS WITH ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS

Abraham was eighty-five years old when God appeared to him in the land of Canaan and established the unilateral covenant that is recorded in Genesis 15. After fourteen years had passed, God again appeared to Abraham to assure him that He would not forget His covenant. Because many more years would pass before God would begin to fulfill His promises, He instituted the sign of circumcision for each generation to come. Circumcision was a fleshly token—a sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham, which would be fulfilled in its time.

The institution of circumcision did not in any way alter the promises that God had given to Abraham, which were ratified by the covenant more than a decade earlier. The Scriptural account shows that ratification required a blood sacrifice (Gen. 15:8-10). God Himself walked between the parts of this sacrifice, signifying that He had ratified His covenant with Abraham (verses 17-18). As we have seen, this act was a maledictory oath representing the symbolic death of the ratifier.

When a covenant has been ratified by a maledictory oath, it is placed in effect and remains binding until the death of the ratifier or ratifiers. A covenant that has been placed in effect cannot be added to or diminished from, nor can it be annulled. The apostle Paul confirms this basic principle of covenantal law: "Brethren, (I am speaking from a human perspective), even when a man's covenant has been ratified, no one nullifies *it*, or adds a codicil to it. Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises spoken..." (Gal. 3:15-16).

Because the covenant that God made with Abraham was ratified by a maledictory oath, it could not be changed in any way. The circumcision of the flesh, which was later instituted for Abraham's physical descendants, could not be added to the covenant and made obligatory for Abraham's spiritual children, who would receive the promises through faith in Jesus Christ—the true Seed of Abraham. God had guaranteed the fulfillment of the promises through His unilateral covenant with Abraham.

God Institutes Circumcision as a Sign of His Covenant

The institution of circumcision as a requirement for the physical descendants of Abraham is recorded in Genesis 17. In beginning the account of this physical requirement, the Scriptures reveal a most important spiritual principle. This truth is found in the first words that God spoke when He appeared to Abraham: "And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I *am* the Almighty God! Walk before Me and be perfect' " (Gen. 17:1).

When God commanded Abraham to be perfect [wholehearted], He was referring to an attitude of perfect obedience. God was requiring Abraham to obey His voice and to keep His commandments and His laws with a loving, devoted, wholehearted attitude toward Him. The Scriptures clearly reveal that the commandments, laws and statutes of God were in full force and effect in the days of Abraham. In fact, Abraham's obedience to the laws of God was the very reason that the promises of the covenant were passed on to his descendants. God's words to Isaac after Abraham's death confirm this truth: "And the LORD appeared to him [Isaac] and said: 'Do not go down into Egypt. Live in the land which I shall tell you of. Stay in this land, and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your seed, I will give all these lands; and **I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham your father**;

" 'And **I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens** and will give to your seed all these lands. And **in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, BECAUSE ABRAHAM OBEYED MY VOICE AND KEPT MY CHARGE, MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, AND MY LAWS**' " (Gen. 26:2-5).

Contrary to the teachings of most theologians, the laws of God have been in effect from the time of creation. God has always required obedience to His laws and commandments. Adam and Eve understood that there were laws and commandments which God required them to obey. The Scriptures record that Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying the laws of God (Rom. 5:14, I Tim. 2:14). Through sin, they came under the death penalty, as did all their descendants (Rom. 5:12). The fact that "death reigned from Adam to Moses" shows that God's laws were in force during this entire period of man's history (verse 14). The commandments, statutes and judgments that God delivered to Moses at Mount Sinai were the same laws that God commanded Abraham to obey.

When God gave this command to Abraham, He promised that He would fulfill the covenant that He had established with him. One of the promises of the covenant was that He would multiply the descendants of Abraham. Long before this promise was given, God told Abraham that he would become a great nation (Gen. 12:2). In the account in Genesis 17, God expanded that promise. Notice what God said to Abraham: " 'I *am* the Almighty God! Walk before Me and be perfect. And **I will make** [accomplish] **My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly**.' And Abram fell on his face. And God talked with him, saying, 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be **a father of many nations**' " (Gen. 17:1-4).

The Scriptures state that God "calls the things that are not as though they are" (Rom. 4:17). In modern terminology, God's word was "as good as done." Because the promises would surely come to pass, God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "the father of nations." Notice: "Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; **for I have made you a father of many nations.** And I will

make you exceedingly fruitful, and **I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will ESTABLISH MY COVENANT between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations** for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your seed after you" (Gen. 17:5-7).

At this time, God confirmed that the covenant He had made with Abraham would be extended to his descendants of all generations throughout the ages. The land of Canaan, where Abraham had sojourned as a stranger, would become their possession forever: " 'And I will give the land to you in which you are a sojourner, and to your seed after you, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. And I will be their God.' And God said to Abraham, 'And **you shall keep My covenant, you and your seed after you in their generations**' " (verses 8-9).

When God established His covenant with Abraham, He did not require any active participation by Abraham. Abraham did not participate in the ratification of the covenant by walking between the parts. Abraham's only participation was his active, believing faith in God, which "was counted to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). God had determined in advance that the promises He made to Abraham would be fulfilled through the righteousness of faith—not through physical requirements or rituals. The circumcision of the flesh, which followed the covenant, did not replace faith as a condition for receiving the promises. To the contrary, this physical requirement was instituted by God as an outward demonstration of the faith that would bring the fulfillment of the covenant. It was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith" through which the promises would be received (Rom. 4:11).

The circumcision of the flesh foreshadowed the future circumcision of the heart, which would be granted to all nations through faith in Jesus Christ, the promised Seed. Because the covenant would ultimately be extended to all nations through faith, the sign of circumcision was not limited exclusively to the physical lineage of Abraham. Every male in his household, whether a descendant of Abraham or of foreign blood, was required to bear the token of the covenant. Here are God's instructions:

"This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you. **Every male child among you shall be circumcised**. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin. And it shall be **a sign of a covenant between Me and you**. And a son of eight days shall be circumcised among you, every male child in your generations; **he that is born in the house, or bought with silver of any foreigner who *is* not of your seed**. He that is born in your house, and he that is bought with your silver, must be circumcised. And **My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant**. And the uncircumcised male child whose flesh of his foreskin is **not circumcised,** that soul **shall be cut off from his people—***for* he has broken My covenant" (Gen. 17:10-14).

Notice that every male who was not circumcised was "cut off from his people." Being cut off from the covenant people meant that he was also

cut off from the blessings of God. Because he did not bear the sign of the covenant in his flesh, he could not partake of the blessings that the covenant would bring.

The sign of circumcision later became an ordinance of the Passover. From the time of Israel's first Passover, all male participants were required to be circumcised. This command of God is recorded in Exodus 12: "And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'This *is* the ordinance of the Passover. No stranger shall eat of it. But every man's servant that is bought for silver, **when you have circumcised him, then he shall eat of it**....All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. **And when a stranger shall dwell with you**, and desires to keep the Passover to the LORD, **let all his males be circumcised**, and then let him come near and keep it. And he shall be as one that is born in the land. And **no uncircumcised person shall eat of it**' " (verses 43-44, 47-48).

The Covenant Is Confirmed to Isaac

When God established the covenant, He promised to give Abraham a son. At that time, God did not reveal to Abraham how this son would be born. Abraham's wife Sarai, who had never conceived a child, was well past the childbearing age. At her suggestion, Abraham took her maidservant Hagar to be his wife. Hagar gave birth to a son, whom Abraham named Ishmael.

Ishmael was thirteen years old when God appeared to Abraham and gave him the command for circumcision. Although Ishmael received the sign of circumcision, he was not the son that God had promised. Since Abraham considered Ishmael to be his legitimate heir, God revealed that the son He had promised to give Abraham would be conceived by Sarai: "And God said to Abraham: 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but her name *shall be* Sarah. And I will bless her, and give you a son also of her. Yes, I will bless her, and **she shall be *a mother* of nations—kings of people shall be from her**.' And Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall *a child* be born to him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear?' And Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!' And God said: 'Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed. And you shall call his name Isaac. And **I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him**' " (Gen. 17:15-19).

God chose Isaac to be the heir of the covenant, through which blessings would come to all nations. It was through the descendants of Isaac that Jesus Christ, the promised Seed, was born. He was of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Isaac's son Jacob. The descendants of Jacob multiplied into a great nation known as the twelve tribes of Israel. Two of these tribes were descended from the sons of Joseph, who were named Ephraim and Manasseh. In later years, the twelve tribes were divided into two kingdoms—the kingdom of Israel, which was composed of ten tribes, and the smaller kingdom of Judah, composed of only two tribes.

Both kingdoms were conquered by foreign armies, and the people were carried into captivity. In the following centuries, they were dispersed into many different parts of the world.

The comparatively small nation of Jews known today as Israel represents only a fraction of the total number of modern Israelites. The kingdom of Judah, from which the ancestors of the Jews came, was composed of only two of the tribes of Israel. The Jewish people are not the fulfillment of God's promise that the descendants of Isaac would become a multitude of nations and would produce kings of many peoples. Notice again the words of God to Abraham and Sarah: "...your name shall be Abraham; **for I have made you a father of many nations**. And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and **I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you**....her name shall be Sarah...and **she shall be *a mother* of nations—kings of people shall be from her**" (verses 5-7, 15-16).

The descendants of Abraham and Sarah are numbered among the most powerful nations in the world. They grew to become a greater and more powerful people than Ishmael's descendants. But, unlike the descendants of Ishmael, who have retained the knowledge of their ancestry, most modern Israelites do not recognize themselves as the descendants of Isaac. Those who have studied the history of the "lost ten tribes of Israel" recognize that the nations of northwestern Europe, the British Commonwealth, the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are populated by the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These great nations are the fulfillment of the covenant promise!

God Blesses Ishmael

God did not establish His covenant with Ishmael but with Isaac. However, because Abraham besought God on Ishmael's behalf, God gave Ishmael and his descendants a blessing and the promise of becoming a great nation: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **But I will establish My covenant with Isaac**, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time in the next year.' And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham" (verses 20-22).

God fulfilled His promise to bless Ishmael and multiply his descendants. All the Arabic peoples of the Middle East are a fulfillment of that blessing. These hundreds of millions of modern Ishmaelites are a testimony of the veracity of the Word of God.

Isaac—the Promised Son

When the promise of Isaac's birth was given, Abraham was ninety-nine years old. On the same day, Abraham received the command to be circumcised. According to God's instructions, Abraham and all the males in his household were circumcised that very day (verses 23-27). From that

time forward, his descendants of all generations were required to circumcise their males.

Abraham's son Isaac, who was born the following year, was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth: "And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as He had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him (whom Sarah bore to him) Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him" (Gen. 21:1-5).

When Isaac was five years old, Ishmael and his mother Hagar were sent away. From that time, Isaac was recognized as Abraham's only son and heir (Gen. 21:8-12). But before Isaac reached manhood, God gave Abraham a command that appeared to contradict the promise He had made. Although God had told Abraham that He would establish His covenant with Isaac, He commanded Abraham to take Isaac and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. God had determined to prove Abraham by putting his faith to the ultimate test: "And it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you' " (Gen. 22:1-2).

In the *King James Version*, the account begins with these words: "And it came to pass after these things, that **God did tempt** Abraham..." (Gen. 22:1, *KJV*). This translation has misled some to believe that God was tempting Abraham to sin. But the words of the apostle James show the absolute impossibility of such an act by God: "Do not let anyone who is tempted say, 'I am being tempted by God' because **God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one *with evil***" (Jas. 1:13). God cannot be accused of tempting Abraham to commit evil, nor was there anything wrongful or unjust about the manner in which God chose to test Abraham. The apostle Paul wrote concerning those who accuse God: "What then shall we say? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? MAY IT NEVER BE!" (Rom. 9:14).

It is not for man to criticize or question the way that God chooses to work out His purpose. The apostle Paul makes this point very clear: "Yes, indeed, O man, who are you to answer against God? Shall the thing that is formed say to the one who formed *it*, 'Why did you make me this way?' Or doesn't the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump of clay one vessel unto honor, and another vessel unto dishonor? And *who dares to question His purpose* if God, willing to show *His* wrath and to make known His power, chose in much long-suffering to put up with *the* vessels of wrath which were created for destruction; In order that He might make known the riches of His glory unto *the* vessels of mercy, which He prepared before for glory, those of us whom He also called..." (Rom. 9:20-24).

God, Who is both Creator and Lawgiver, has the power to impart life and the authority to take life (Jas. 4:12). It was wholly within His authority to ask Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. However, as the account in the book of Genesis shows, it was not God's purpose to take Isaac's life. The purpose of His command was to test Abraham's faith by his willingness to obey.

Unlike some who read the account today, Abraham did not question the command of God. With complete faith in the power and the wisdom of God, he humbly obeyed: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two *of* his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, 'You stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go yonder and worship, and come back again to you' " (Gen. 22:3-5).

Although the account does not give the exact age of Isaac, he is referred to as a "lad." This indicates that Isaac was between 12 and 19 years of age. By this time in his life, Isaac had seen his father offer many sacrifices to God. He knew that Abraham had made preparations for this sacrifice, but no animal had been chosen from the flock or the herd. Not knowing that God Himself had appointed the sacrifice, Isaac wondered where his father expected to find an animal for the offering: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son. And he took the fire *pot* in his hand, and a knife. And they both went together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said: 'My father.' And he said: 'Here I *am,* my son.' And he said, 'Behold the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' So they both went on together" (verses 6-8).

From a human perspective, testing Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son seems unreasonable—even unthinkable. But in giving this command, God was not asking more than He Himself was willing to do. The command that Abraham received was issued by the God Who would become the Father, and it was delivered by the God Who would become the Son. From the foundation of the world, it was ordained that the life of the Son would be sacrificed (Rev. 13:8). He would become "the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Abraham's words as he prepared to offer his son Isaac were a prophecy of this very event: "My son, **God will provide Himself a lamb** for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8).

As the future Lamb of God would be resurrected from death, so Abraham believed that God would restore his son Isaac after he had been sacrificed. The apostle Paul reveals the thoughts of Abraham as he carried out God's command: "By faith Abraham, when he was being tried, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises offered up *his* only begotten *son* of whom it was said, 'In Isaac shall your Seed be called'; *because* ***he*** **reckoned that God was able to raise him even from among *the* dead**, from which he also received

him in a figurative way" (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham's faith in God's power to resurrect Isaac is clearly expressed in the words that he spoke to his two young menservants: "...**I and the boy** will go yonder **and worship, and come again** to you" (Gen. 22:5).

When Isaac learned that God had appointed him to be the sacrifice, he humbly submitted to the instructions of Abraham his father. Without any resistance, Isaac allowed himself to be bound and laid on the altar that Abraham had built for the offering: "And they came to the place which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. And he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the wood, upon the altar. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son" (Gen. 22:9-10).

By his humble obedience and complete submission to God's will, Abraham had demonstrated his faith. God's command had served its purpose. At this point, God intervened to prevent Abraham from harming his son: "And the angel of the LORD called to him from the heavens and said, 'Abraham! Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I *am*.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him, **for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me**' " (verses 11-12).

Abraham had told Isaac that God would provide the lamb for the burnt offering, and God did provide. **God miraculously provided the lamb**! Since Abraham and Isaac had not seen the ram caught in the thicket until this time, it is evident that this ram was sent directly by God as a substitute sacrifice for Isaac, Abraham's firstborn son by Sarah. Notice: "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked. And, behold, behind *him* a ram was entangled in a thicket by its horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide: [Adonai-jireh]; so that it is said *until* this day, 'In the mount of the LORD it will be provided' " (verses 13-14).

The works that Abraham did when he was commanded to offer Isaac were an outward manifestation of his faith and belief in God. The apostle James shows how this combination of faith and works put Abraham in right standing with God: "But are you willing to understand, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac, his own son, upon the altar? Do you not see that faith was working together with his works, and by works *his* faith was perfected? And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Now Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness'; and he was called a friend of God. You see, then, that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only....For as the body without *the* spirit is dead, in the same way also, faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:20-26).

Abraham's works, which were accomplished through faith, showed that he loved God more than his own son. In manifesting his love toward God by his willingness to offer up Isaac, Abraham fulfilled one of the requirements for

receiving eternal life: "The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and **the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me**" (Matt. 10:37).

God had put Abraham to the test, and Abraham had remained steadfast in his faith and love toward God. Because he endured the test, Abraham will receive the gift of eternal life: "Blessed *is the* man who endures trials because, **after he has been proved, he shall receive a crown of life**, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (Jas. 1:12).

The faith that Abraham exercised is the kind of faith that is required for salvation. All who desire to receive salvation must demonstrate this same faith by willingly obeying God, as Abraham did. As God's covenant with Abraham was established on this kind of faith, so also is the New Covenant. That is why those who enter the New Covenant are called "the children of Abraham."

A Foretype of the Substitute Sacrifice for the Firstborn

As God had provided a substitute sacrifice for Isaac, Abraham's firstborn from Sarah, so the Passover was instituted as a substitute sacrifice for the firstborn of Israel. When it was God's time to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, He commanded them to sacrifice the Passover. The Passover lamb became the substitute sacrifice for the firstborn of the children of Israel. At midnight on the Passover night, God passed over the houses of the children of Israel, sparing their firstborn and killing all the firstborn of Egypt, man and beast, in His final judgment against the Egyptians and their gods.

From that time, offering a substitute sacrifice for the firstborn became a lasting ordinance for Israel: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Sanctify all the firstborn to Me, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, of man and of beast....you shall set apart to the LORD all that opens the womb, every firstborn that comes of any animal which you have; the males *shall be* the LORD'S. And every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. **And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem** [with a substitute sacrifice]. And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What does this *mean*? you shall say to him, 'The LORD brought us out of Egypt by the strength of *His* hand, from the house of bondage. And it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn of the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that opens the womb, that are males. But **all the firstborn of my sons I redeem**' " (Ex. 13:1, 12-15).

The substitute sacrifice for the firstborn, like the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, was fulfilled by the death of Jesus Christ. As the Lamb of God, He offered His own body and blood to redeem not only the firstborn but all Israel and all mankind. Through faith in Jesus Christ, the promised

Seed, all nations may become the children of Abraham and receive the blessings of the covenant.

God Confirms the Promises by an Unconditional Oath

Abraham had demonstrated that he would obey God unconditionally, no matter how great the test. Because he did not falter in his obedience, God made the promises He had given to Abraham unconditional and irrevocable. Notice the oath that God swore to Abraham: "And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, '**By Myself have I sworn,' says the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son; that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore.** And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall **all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice**' " (Gen. 22:15-18).

There can be no greater oath than that which God gave to Abraham. The eternal God swore by His very existence and all that He is! There are two distinct aspects to this oath of God: the guarantee of spiritual sons as the stars of heaven, and of physical descendants as the sand of the seashore. Two additional promises are included: "your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" and "**in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**." Through this unconditional oath, all the promises were now eternally assured. God's plan of deliverance for the physical descendants of Abraham and His plan of salvation for the spiritual seed of Abraham would be fulfilled as He had promised.

In this chapter, we have seen that the covenant between God and Abraham was confirmed to Isaac and his descendants through the sign of circumcision. We have also seen that God's promises to Abraham were confirmed to both his physical descendants and his spiritual seed by an irrevocable oath. In Chapter Twenty-Three, we will learn how God's covenant with Abraham and His irrevocable oath are being fulfilled through the New Covenant.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE NEW COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL SEED

In our study of Genesis 15, we learned that the promise of spiritual seed was given to Abraham on the night of Nisan 14, which was the time that God had appointed for the Passover. As the promise was delivered on the Passover day, so its fulfillment was initiated on the Passover day. Through the New Covenant, which was established by Jesus Christ on the night of His last Passover, the promise of spiritual seed is now being fulfilled. The New Covenant enables all who repent of their sins and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to become the children of Abraham through faith.

In the previous chapter, we studied the account of God's testing of Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 22. During this test, Abraham demonstrated his faith in God by willingly obeying God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac. Because Abraham endured this great trial of his faith, God confirmed His promises to Abraham by an irrevocable oath. The promises, which had been guaranteed by God's covenant with Abraham, were given a double guarantee through the oath that God swore to Abraham. As we will see, the covenant and the irrevocable oath have great significance for the spiritual seed of Abraham—those who become the children of Abraham through faith. Notice the words that the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: "And if **you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to *the* promise**" (Gal. 3:29).

Paul states very plainly that those who belong to Christ are heirs of the promises that God gave to Abraham. As there were promises for the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac, so there were promises for those who would become the spiritual children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ: "Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are *the* children of promise" (Gal. 4:28). God's promises to the spiritual seed of Abraham far surpass the promises that were given to Abraham's physical seed. The physical seed received a temporary inheritance in the Promised Land, but the spiritual seed will receive an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Eternal Life Through the Promised Seed

When we fully understand the Word of God, it is clear that the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ was promised in the covenant with Abraham. Let us again examine the promises that God made to Abraham: "**He that shall come forth out of your own loins shall be your heir**' " (Gen. 15:4). God's promise to give Abraham his own physical seed was fulfilled through the birth of Isaac, who became the forefather of the twelve tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah came Jesus Christ, the promised Seed. As the apostle Paul shows, He is the true Heir of the promises that God gave to Abraham: "**Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises spoken**.

He does not say, 'and to *your* seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'and to your Seed,' which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

Notice the next promise that God made to Abraham: "And He brought him outside and said, '**Look now toward the heavens and number the stars—if you are able to count them.**' And He said to him, '**So shall your seed be.' And he believed in the LORD. And He accounted it to him for righteousness**" (Gen. 15:5-6). This promise does not refer to Abraham's physical descendants but to his spiritual seed, who will receive the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Because the spiritual seed will inherit everlasting glory, God took Abraham out to show him the stars in heaven, rather than the ground beneath his feet. As the stars of heaven are high above the earth, so the promise of eternal life is exceedingly greater than the promise of physical blessings. The blessings that were offered to the physical seed through the Old Covenant were temporary, but the blessings that are offered to the spiritual seed through the New Covenant are eternal.

The apostle Paul understood that the Old Covenant could not bring the spiritual blessings that God promised in His covenant with Abraham. These blessings can only be imparted by Jesus Christ, Who is Abraham's true Seed and the Heir of the promises: "Now this I say, *that* ***the*** **covenant ratified beforehand by God to Christ** cannot be annulled by the law [the requirements of the Old Covenant], which was *given* four hundred and thirty years later [to Israel], so as to make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance *is* by law, *it is* no longer by promise. But God granted *it* to Abraham by promise. Why then the law? It was placed alongside *the promises* [because a ratified covenant cannot be added to] for the purpose of *defining* transgressions, **until the Seed should come to whom *the* promise was made**..." (Gal. 3:17-19).

Paul makes it clear that the Old Covenant with Abraham's physical seed was temporary. When Jesus Christ established the New Covenant, the promise of eternal life through faith superseded and replaced the promise of blessings through the requirements of the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, individuals of every nation and race may inherit the promise of eternal life by becoming the children of Abraham through faith: "*It is* exactly as *it is written*: '**Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness**.' Because of this, *you should* understand that those who *are* of faith are **the *true* sons of Abraham**. Now *in* the Scriptures, God, seeing in advance that He would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' *It is* for this reason that those who are of faith are being blessed with the believing Abraham" (Gal. 3:6-9).

The Way to Eternal Life Is Revealed by Jesus Christ

As we learned, the promise of spiritual seed was given to Abraham on the night of Nisan 14, the set time that God had appointed for the Passover. Likewise, the fulfillment of this promise through the New Covenant was opened to all mankind through Jesus Christ on the night of Nisan 14.

The words that Jesus spoke to His disciples on the night of His last Passover are the words of the New Covenant. These words show the way to the glory and immortality that God promised to Abraham's spiritual seed.

The apostle John was inspired to write in his Gospel the words of the New Covenant, which reveal the way to eternal life. The account begins in John 13 with the words that Jesus spoke when He instituted the new Passover ceremony for His disciples. After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus admonished them to follow His example by practicing footwashing as part of the new ceremony. He also commanded His disciples to practice the same kind of love that He had showed toward them: "A new commandment I give to you; that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that is *how* you are to love one another" (verse 34).

Jesus' words in John 14 reveal that the New Covenant is based not only on love but also on faith: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were otherwise, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also" (verses 1-3).

Jesus made it clear that the only way to eternal life is through faith in Him: "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (verse 6).

Jesus went on to show that true faith leads to loving obedience and the receiving of the Holy Spirit: "If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age; *even* the Spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you, and shall be within you....The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him....If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. The one who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me" (verses 15-24).

The words of Jesus in John 15 and 16 offer great hope and encouragement. Jesus declared that if His followers live in His love, they will be able to remain faithful in the face of every adversity. Moreover, He revealed that God the Father Himself loves everyone who loves the Son, and that each one can pray directly to the Father in His name: "In that day, you shall ask in My name; and I do not tell you that I will beseech the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:26-27). Then Jesus gave words of hope throughout all ages: "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world" (verse 33).

The prayer of Jesus in John 17 is most profound and moving. In His prayer, Jesus asks God the Father to restore Him to His former glory in order that He may fulfill the Father's will by granting eternal life to everyone the Father calls: "Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your own Son, so that Your Son may also glorify You; since You have given Him authority over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You before the world existed. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things that You have given Me are from You. For I have given them the words that You gave Me; and they have received *them* and truly have known that I came from You; and they have believed that You did send Me. I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours *are* Mine; and I have been glorified in them' " (verses 1-10).

Jesus concluded His prayer by asking God the Father to sanctify every believer who lives by His Word, so that they may all become one with Him and the Father, and may share Their eternal glory as spirit beings in the kingdom of God: "Sanctify them in Your truth; Your Word is the truth. Even as You did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they may be sanctified in *Your* truth. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, in order that the world may believe that You did send Me. And I have given them the glory that You gave *to* Me, in order that they may be one, in the same way *that* We are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me [may be resurrected to eternal life and glory] where I am, so that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; because You did love Me before *the* foundation of *the* world. Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. And I have made known Your name to them, and will make *it* known; so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (verses 17-26).

The Promise of Eternal Glory

The prayer of Jesus reveals God's plan for fulfilling His promise to Abraham of a spiritual seed that will be like the stars of heaven. It was by God's will and purpose that these words of the New Covenant were spoken by Jesus Christ on the Passover night—the night of Nisan 14. This was the same night that the promise was given to Abraham: " '**Look now toward**

the heavens, and number the stars—if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your seed be' " (Gen. 15:5).

The promise of spiritual seed who will inherit eternal life is confirmed by the prophet Daniel. In his description of the resurrection, Daniel shows that those who receive eternal life will shine as the stars of heaven: "And many of them those who sleep in the dust of the earth [are dead in the graves] shall awake [in the resurrection], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. **And they who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever**" (Dan. 12:2-3).

Jesus Christ also spoke of the time of the resurrection. Notice the similarity to Daniel's prophecy: "Therefore, as the tares are gathered and consumed in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all the offenders and those who are practicing lawlessness, and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"**Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father**" (Matt. 13:40-43).

To confirm the resurrection to glory and immortality, Jesus gave a special revelation to Peter, James and John. On the Mount of Transfiguration, He showed them in vision what He would look like in His glorified form in the kingdom of God: "Truly I say to you, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste of death until they have seen [in vision] the Son of man coming in His kingdom. And after six days, Jesus took with *Him* Peter and James and his brother John, and brought them up into a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and **His face shined as the sun, and His garments became white as the light**" (Matt. 16:28; 17:1-2). Afterwards, Jesus commanded them not to tell the vision to anyone until He was resurrected from the dead (verse 9).

Many years after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the apostle John in His glorified form: "I was in *the* Spirit on the day of the Lord; and I heard a loud voice like a trumpet behind me, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last'; and, 'What you see, write in a book, and send *it* to the churches that *are* in Asia: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.' And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands; and in *the* midst of the seven lampstands *one* like *the* Son of man, clothed in *a garment* reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate.

"And His head and hair *were* like white wool, white as snow; and His eyes *were* like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like fine brass, as if *they* glowed in a furnace; and His voice *was* like *the* sound of many waters. And in his right hand He had seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword went out of His mouth; **and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full* power**" (Rev. 1:10-16).

As Jesus Christ was both the Seed of Abraham and the Son of God, so those who believe in Him and live by His words are both the children of Abraham and the children of God. Like Jesus, the Firstborn, they will be resurrected to immortality. They will inherit the promise of eternal life as glorified spirit beings in the kingdom of God: "For **as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God**. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but **you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father**.'

"The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. **Now if we *are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him**. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with **the glory that shall be revealed in us**" (Rom. 8:14-18).

The apostle John shows that the transformation of the children of God to eternal glory will take place at the coming of Jesus Christ: "Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called **the children of God!** For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that **when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is**" (I John 3:1-2).

When the children of God are glorified, the words of Jesus Christ will be fulfilled: "**Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father**" (Matt. 13:43). Exactly as God promised Abraham, there will be an innumerable multitude of glorified seed who will shine as the stars: "And He brought him outside and said, '**Look now toward the heavens, and number the stars—if you are able to count them.**' And He said to him: 'So shall your seed be' " (Gen. 15:5).

Old Testament Foretype of the New Covenant Fulfillment

In reading the Old Testament, it is easy to overlook the spiritual aspect of God's covenant with Abraham and focus only on its fulfillment to the physical seed. However, the writings of the apostles in the New Testament clearly reveal the significance of the promise of spiritual seed. The fulfillment of this promise through Jesus Christ—the true Seed and Heir of Abraham—is explained and expounded in many passages in the New Testament. These passages shed great light on the covenant between God and Abraham. When we compare the Old Testament accounts with the records of the New Testament, we find a number of distinct parallels. Key events that took place in the days of Abraham bear a striking resemblance to events that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

As the book of Genesis shows, the begettal and birth of Isaac were the result of miraculous intervention by God: "And the LORD appeared to him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre, as he sat at the tent door in the heat

of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by [opposite] him....And they said to him: 'Where *is* Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'Behold, in the tent.' And He [the LORD] said, 'I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and lo, Sarah your wife *shall have* a son.' And Sarah heard at the tent door which was behind Him.

"Now Abraham and Sarah *were* old, *well* advanced in days, and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I, who am old, bear a child? **Is anything too hard for the LORD?** At the time appointed I will return again, according to the time of life, and Sarah *shall have* a son.' Then Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh:' for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh' " (Gen. 18:1-2, 9-15).

Unlike Sarah, Abraham did not doubt God's word in the least, as the apostle Paul shows: "(Exactly as it is written, 'I have made you [Abraham] a father of many nations.') before God in Whom he believed, Who gives life to the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they are; *and* who against hope believed in hope, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, 'So shall your seed be.' And he, not being weak in the faith, considered not his own body, already having become dead, being about one hundred years old, nor *did he consider* the deadness of Sarah's womb; and he did not doubt the promise of God through unbelief; rather, he was strengthened in the faith, giving glory to God; for he was fully persuaded that what He has promised, He is also able to do. As a result, it was also imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:17-22).

Although Sarah initially showed doubt at God's promise, she repented and was strengthened by faith: "By faith also Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, and gave birth *when* she was *well* beyond the childbearing age because she esteemed Him faithful Who had personally promised *her a son*" (Heb. 11:11).

The book of Genesis records the fulfillment of God's promise: "And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said. And the LORD did to Sarah as He had spoken, for Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him (whom Sarah bore to him) Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, 'God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me.' And she said, 'Who could have said to Abraham *that* Sarah would suckle children? For I have borne a son to him in his old age' " (Gen. 21:1-7).

The miraculous birth of Isaac foreshadowed the far greater miracle of the birth of Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was miraculously conceived by the virgin Mary: "Then the angel said to her, 'Do

not be afraid, Mary, because you have found grace with God; and behold, you shall conceive in *your* womb and give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called *the* Son of *the* Highest'....But Mary said to the angel, 'How shall this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?' And the angel answered *and* said to her, '*The* Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and *the* power of *the* Highest shall overshadow you; and for this reason, the Holy One being begotten in you shall be called *the* Son of God' " (Luke 1:30-35).

When we compare the Scriptural accounts of the birth of Isaac and the birth of Jesus Christ, it is clear that Isaac was a type of the coming Messiah. Isaac was the firstborn of Sarah, and Jesus was the firstborn of Mary. Isaac was the miraculously conceived son through whom the physical seed would come, and Jesus was the miraculously conceived Son through Whom the spiritual seed would come. As the first of Abraham's spiritual seed to be resurrected to immortality, Jesus is also called "*the* firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18) and "*the* firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

The account of God's testing of Abraham in Genesis 22 reveals more parallels in the life of Isaac and the life of Jesus Christ: "And He said, 'Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, [the son of promise], and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you' " (Gen. 22:2).

Abraham willingly obeyed God when He commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac because he had faith that God would resurrect him from the dead. The words of the apostle Paul show Abraham's great faith: "By faith Abraham, when he was being tried, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises offered up *his* only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac shall your Seed be called'; ***because he* reckoned that God was able to raise him up even from among *the* dead**, from which he also received him in a figurative way" (Heb. 11:17-19).

In showing that he was willing to sacrifice his only son and heir, Abraham was a type of God the Father, Who willingly gave His own Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world: "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

As Abraham was a type of God the Father, so Isaac was a type of Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, Who was sent by the Father to give His life for the sins of the world: "And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here I *am*, my son.' And he said, 'Behold the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering' " (Gen. 22:7-8). The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was planned long before the time of Abraham and Isaac: "...*the* Lamb slain from *the* foundation of *the* world" (Rev. 13:8).

Like Jesus, Who humbly and willingly submitted to His Father's will, Isaac willingly obeyed his father Abraham: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son..." (Gen. 22:6).

In carrying the wood for the sacrifice, Isaac foreshadowed the ordeal that Jesus would suffer when He carried the wooden cross on which He would be crucified: "Therefore, he [Pilate] then delivered Him up to them so that He might be crucified. And they took Jesus and led *Him* away. And He went out bearing His own cross to the place called *The Place* of a Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha " (John 19:16-17). Jesus was too weak from the beating and scourging that He had received to carry the cross the entire distance to Golgotha. When His strength was exhausted, the leaders of the Jews compelled a Cyrenian named Simon to carry it the rest of the way: "And as they led Him away, they laid hold on a certain Cyrenian *named* Simon, who was coming from a field; *and* they put the cross on him, that he might carry *it* behind Jesus" (Luke 23:26).

There are more parallels in the account in Genesis 22. When Isaac learned that he was to be the sacrificial offering, he did not resist his father, but allowed himself to be bound and placed on the altar: "And they came to the place which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order. And he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the wood, upon the altar" (verse 9).

This also was a type of Jesus Christ, Who, when the time of His crucifixion had come, made no attempt to defend Himself: "And when He was accused by the chief priests and the elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Don't You hear how many things they testify against You?' And He did not answer even one word to him, so that the governor was greatly amazed" (Matt. 27:12-14).

Before his trial, Jesus wholly committed Himself to fulfill the Father's will by sacrificing His life. He was, in effect, already slain. In like manner, because Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac was counted by God as already having been slain: "And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called to him out of the heavens, and said, 'Abraham! Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I *am*.' And He said: 'Do not lay your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing **you have not withheld your son**, your only son, from Me' " (Gen. 22:10-12).

Unlike Isaac, who was spared from actual death, Jesus Christ shed His blood and died on the cross: "*Then another took a spear and thrust it into His side, and out came water and blood*. And after crying out again with a loud voice, Jesus yielded up *His* spirit" (Matt. 27:49-50). *For textual evidence which supports this record, see Appendix W*.

While Isaac was symbolically slain and resurrected, Jesus Christ truly died and was miraculously resurrected from the grave by the power of God: "But the angel answered *and* said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you

are seeking Jesus, Who was crucified. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said' " (Matt. 28:5-6).

When Abraham told Isaac that God Himself would provide a sacrificial lamb, Isaac had believed. Because they trusted in God, He miraculously provided a substitute sacrifice in place of Isaac: "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked. And, behold, behind *him* a ram was entangled in a thicket by its horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son" (Gen. 22:13).

The ram itself was a type of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Who was sacrificed for sinners: "Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Like the ram that was sacrificed in Isaac's stead, Jesus Christ becomes the substitute sacrifice for our sins when we are symbolically buried with Him in baptism. We are symbolically resurrected from the baptismal grave to walk in newness of life through the power of the Holy Spirit, with the promise of eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:4-9; 8:11-17).

The events that took place in the life of Isaac, Abraham's son, were only an imperfect foretype of the events that were later fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the promised Seed. As the Firstborn from the dead, He is fulfilling the promise of blessings for all nations by offering the gift of eternal life through faith.

The Dual Fulfillment of God's Promises to Abraham

The parallel events that are revealed in the Old and New Testaments show how the promises of God were first fulfilled through the physical seed of Abraham and then through the spiritual Seed. The irrevocable oath that God gave to Abraham clearly shows the duality of the promises: "And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, '**By Myself have I sworn, says the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son; that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens** [the spiritual seed], **and as the sand which is upon the seashore** [the physical seed]. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. **AND IN YOUR SEED** [Jesus Christ, the promised Seed] **shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice**' " (Gen. 22:15-18).

The promised Seed through Whom blessings would come to all nations was not Isaac or his descendants, but Jesus Christ: "Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises spoken. He does not say, 'and to *your* seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'and to your Seed,' which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

The apostle Paul shows the significance of God's irrevocable oath to those who become the children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ: "For God, after promising Abraham, swore by Himself, since He could

swear by none greater, saying, 'Surely in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you.' Now after he [Abraham] had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For indeed, men swear by the greater, and confirmation by an oath *puts* an end to all disputes between them. **In this *way* God, desiring more abundantly to show the heirs of the promise the unchangeable nature of His own purpose, confirmed *it* by an oath; so that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible *for* God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope *that ha*s *been* set before *us***; which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and steadfast, and which enters into the *sanctuary* within the veil; where Jesus has entered for us *as* a forerunner, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:13-20).

To fulfill His promise to Abraham of a spiritual seed, God the Father offered His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world: "He [God] Who did not spare even His own Son, but gave Him up for us all..." (Rom. 8:32). Through the blood of Jesus Christ, which is the blood of the New Covenant, the gift of eternal life is now being offered to all whom God calls from all nations. The fulfillment of this promise is the very reason for the annual observance of the Christian Passover.

The promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Author of the New Covenant, is immeasurably greater than any blessing that was offered under the Old Covenant with Israel. In Chapter Twenty-Four, we will learn more about the superiority of the New Covenant.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

As we have learned, both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant were established on God's promises to Abraham. The promises were given on the night of Nisan 14, which became the Passover day, and the covenant between God and Abraham was ratified on the following day—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Four hundred and thirty years later, to the very same day, God fulfilled His promise to bring Abraham's descendants out of their affliction. At this time, God began to establish His covenant with them. The instructions that God gave for the Passover in Egypt were the first words of the Old Covenant between God and Israel. After the Exodus from Egypt, God delivered the complete words of the Old Covenant at Mt. Sinai on the day of Pentecost. On the following day, the covenant was ratified by the people with the blood of bullocks (Ex. 24:3-8).

For the children of Israel under the Old Covenant, the Passover required the sacrificing of the lamb and placing of its blood on the door posts of the houses. This ceremony commemorated God's passing over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, sparing their firstborn, but killing the Egyptians' firstborn. On that same day, the children of Israel were released from the bondage of Egypt.

For the children of Abraham by faith, who are under the New Covenant, there is no need for the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. The Passover of the New Covenant is a commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. His one perfect sacrifice opened the way for all mankind to be delivered from the bondage of sin and receive the gift of eternal life.

The New Covenant, which was ratified on the Passover day by the blood of Jesus Christ, is fulfilling God's promise to Abraham of blessings for all nations. The spiritual blessings that are granted through the New Covenant were never offered through the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant, which was based on the blood of animal sacrifices, promised only physical, temporal blessings from God. To receive these blessings, the children of Israel were required to obey God by keeping His commandments, statutes and judgments in the letter of the law. Obedience in the spirit of the law was not possible under the Old Covenant, because the people of Israel had not received the Holy Spirit.

According to the terms of the Old Covenant, if the children of Israel obeyed God, they would receive physical blessings. If they disobeyed Him and rejected His commandments, they would suffer the correction and curses of God. Deuteronomy 28 gives a complete summary of the blessings that were promised to the children of Israel under the Old Covenant, and the curses that would beset them if they forsook their covenant with God.

When we read Deuteronomy 28, we can clearly see that the promise of eternal life was not a promise of the Old Covenant. The promise of eternal life through the forgiveness of sins was not offered until the New Covenant was established by Jesus Christ. The apostle John makes that very clear: "And of His fullness [Jesus Christ's] we have all received, and grace upon grace [the gift of salvation]. For the law [the Old Covenant] was given through Moses; *but* the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

The Old Covenant with its animal sacrifices, which continually reminded the people of their sins, pointed to the need for a better covenant that would bring deliverance from sin. That covenant was established by Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself as the perfect and complete sacrifice for sin for all time. Redemption from sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, which is the blood of the New Covenant, is fully revealed in the New Testament. This salvation was announced in the Old Testament, which records the curses for sin and the prophecies of a Savior, but it was not revealed until the coming of Jesus Christ: "The Law and the Prophets *were* until John; from that time the kingdom of God is preached..." (Luke 16:16).

Jesus Christ came into the world to proclaim the full salvation of God the Father through the New Covenant. The New Covenant, as revealed by Jesus Christ in the New Testament, is far greater than the Old Covenant. The New Covenant was confirmed with the blood of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God—the ultimate sacrifice of God! It was sealed on the day of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit as a gift from God the Father. All who enter the New Covenant receive the power of the Holy Spirit, which enables them to overcome sin in the flesh and to grow in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, with the promise of eternal life at the resurrection (Acts 2:1-11, 16-18, 21-39).

Unlike the Old Covenant, the New Covenant offers spiritual promises and eternal blessings! The blessings of the New Covenant include the gift of salvation and the promise of eternal life with an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ will establish that kingdom on the earth at His return. The apostle John describes His coming in the book of Revelation: "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* Ending,' says the Lord, 'Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* coming—the Almighty' " (Rev. 1:7-8). At that time, His saints will be resurrected to immortality and will reign with Him on the earth (Rev. 5:8-10; 20:4-6). All true Christians await the resurrection of the dead and the transformation to glorious eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ.

The promise of eternal life makes the New Covenant immeasurably superior to the Old Covenant. The New Covenant reveals the love and grace of God the Father to all mankind through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. The promise of salvation through the New Covenant is founded on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God the Father Himself calls us to salvation through His Son (John 6:44, 65). God the Father leads us to repentance through His goodness and grace (Rom. 2:4). Repentance means that we

turn from the way of sin—from our transgressions of God's holy, righteous and perfect laws and commandments (I John 3:4). After repenting of our sins, we are commanded to be baptized by full immersion in water (Acts 2:38). Then God the Father gives the gift of His Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-6). From that time forward, we are to walk in newness of life, yielding ourselves to God by practicing righteousness (Rom. 6:3-6, 11-13). The righteousness that we are to practice is clearly defined in Scripture by the commandments of God (Psa. 119:172). As the apostle John shows, obedience to God's commandments is required of everyone who professes to know and love God (I John 2:3-4; 3:24; 5:2-3).

Under the New Covenant, the laws and commandments of God are written in our minds and inscribed on our hearts (Heb. 8:10; 10:16). Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which imparts the mind of Jesus Christ, we are able to understand and obey God's laws in their spiritual meaning and application. Although our obedience requires physical actions and efforts, the result is spiritual and eternal. We have God's promise that if we are conformed to the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ, we will share in His glory and immortality (Col. 1:27-28; 3:1-4; Rom. 8:29). The promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God is made possible by God's grace through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike the people of Israel under the Old Covenant, who were granted limited access to God as members of a physical nation, those who enter the New Covenant enjoy continual fellowship with God as members of His own family. They are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and the children of God the Father. When we fully understand this relationship, and the fantastic and wonderful promises that God has given of eternal life, eternal love and eternal glory in Christ Jesus, it is truly overwhelming! This knowledge and understanding is imparted and understood only through the Holy Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:6-13). Human intellect and rationale cannot fathom this supreme mystery of God—that we can actually become the sons of God! Only those whose minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit can comprehend the magnificent plan that God is working out through the New Covenant.

The Superior Priesthood of the New Covenant

Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ is High Priest and Mediator before the Father's throne, continually interceding for every child of God. Through His intercession, each one receives daily forgiveness of sins and remains in a state of grace, having fellowship with the Father and being strengthened by the Holy Spirit. This daily process of overcoming sin and growing in grace through the power of the Holy Spirit is leading each child of God to spiritual perfection.

In his epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul shows that the New Covenant priesthood of Jesus Christ has replaced the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Covenant: "Now *here is* a summary of the things being discussed: We have such a High Priest Who sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord set up, and not man" (Heb. 8:1-2).

Paul explains that the true sanctuary is the throne of God in heaven, where Jesus Christ ministers as High Priest. The priesthood of the resurrected Jesus Christ, ministering before the very throne of God the Father, is FAR SUPERIOR to the earthly priesthood which ministered at the tabernacle that God instructed Moses to build (verses 2-5). Paul shows that the superiority of the heavenly priesthood is matched by the superiority of the covenant which it ministers:

"But on the other hand, He [the heavenly High Priest] has obtained a *supremely* more excellent ministry, as much greater as the superior covenant of which He is also Mediator, which was established upon superior promises. For if the first *covenant* had been faultless, *then* no provision for a second *covenant* would have been made. But since He found fault with them, He says, ' "Behold, *the* days are coming," says *the* Lord, "when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in *the* day that I took hold of their hand to lead them out of *the* land of Egypt because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them," says *the* Lord. "For this *is* the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days," says *the* Lord: "I will give My laws into their minds, and I will inscribe them upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And they will no longer teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord' because all will know Me, from *the* least to *the* greatest of them; for I will be merciful toward their unrighteousnesses, and their sins and their lawlessness I will not remember ever again.' In speaking of a new *covenant*, He has made the first *covenant* obsolete. Now that which has become old and obsolete *is* about to disappear" (Heb. 8:6-13).

The New Covenant, which is mediated by Jesus Christ from the throne of God the Father, is vastly superior to the Old Covenant, which was ministered from the sanctuary of the tabernacle on earth. Under the Old Covenant, the priesthood offered animal sacrifices that could not remove sins and bring sanctification before God the Father. The ceremonial cleansing of the children of Israel allowed them access to the earthly tabernacle, but it could not purify them from sin. This fact is confirmed by Paul's words in Hebrews 10: "**Because *it is* impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**" (verse 4). The animal sacrifices that were offered at the earthly tabernacle and the temple could not remove sin from the hearts of the people but only purified them in the flesh. This fleshly purification allowed the offerers to continue in the Old Covenant relationship with God and participate in the physical blessings of the covenant. The animal sacrifices were a reminder of sins because they were repeated over and over, year after year (verse 3). They pointed to the need for a **greater sacrifice** that could remove all sins forever (verses 5-7). That greater sacrifice was fulfilled in the body of **Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself once** to atone for the sins of all mankind (verse 10).

The Old Covenant with its animal sacrifices ended when the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ushered in the New Covenant. Unlike the sacrificial offerings of the Old Covenant, which could only purify the flesh, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is able to purify the mind and heart: "But Christ Himself has become High Priest of the coming good things, through the greater and more perfect

tabernacle, not made by *human* hands (that is, not of this *present physical* creation [the temple in Jerusalem, which was then standing]). Not by *the* blood of goats and calves, but by the means of His own blood, He entered once for all into the holiest [the heavenly sanctuary], having *by* Himself secured everlasting redemption *for us*. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and *the* ashes of a heifer sprinkled *on* those who are defiled, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, to a far greater degree, **the blood of Christ**, Who through *the* eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **shall purify your conscience from dead works to serve *the* living God. And for this reason He is *the* Mediator of *the* NEW COVENANT**..." (Heb. 9:11-15).

Paul makes it clear that the work of Jesus Christ as High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant is to bring complete sanctification from sin. Paul shows that this work is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit of God. As Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in sinlessness before God, so He enables every true believer to overcome sin. Through His blood, each believer is reconciled to God the Father and is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit, which empowers the believer to obey God from the heart, as Jesus did: "Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Each Spirit-begotten believer learns to walk in newness of life, forsaking his or her former thoughts and practices. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit begins to produce fruits of righteousness: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23). This process of sanctification and spiritual growth is accomplished as the Holy Spirit is daily supplied to each believer through the ongoing mediation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Pledged to Fulfill the Covenant with Abraham

As we have learned, the covenant between God and Abraham laid the foundation for the New Covenant through Jesus Christ. When we analyze the maledictory oath of God's covenant with Abraham, we find an awesome relationship to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Notice God's command to Abraham: "And He said to him: 'Take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' And he took all these to himself, and divided them in the middle [split them from head to tail], and laid each piece opposite the other; but he did not divide the birds" (Gen. 15:9-10).

The animals for this special covenant sacrifice—a heifer from the herd, a goat and a ram from the flock, and the two fowl—represented the various kinds of animals that were later offered in the sacrifices that God commanded for the tabernacle. These animals symbolized the whole sacrificial system, covering every category of animal sacrifice. As we learned in the previous chapters, these animals were slaughtered during the daylight portion of Nisan 14—the Passover day. By walking between the parts of the slaughtered animals, the ratifier would pledge his life to fulfill the promises of the covenant. This act was called "cutting the covenant." Once cut, the covenant was in effect and could not be changed in any way, as long as the ratifier was living.

As the account shows, the covenant with Abraham was ratified after the sun had set and darkness had come: "And it came to pass, **as the sun was going down** [ending the 14th], that a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And, behold, a horror of great darkness fell upon him....And it came to pass—**when the sun went down** [beginning the 15th] and it was dark—behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces" (verses 12, 17).

This account is most significant. The smoking furnace and the flaming torch that passed between the parts of the sacrificial animals showed that God was ratifying the covenant by a maledictory oath. Through this act, God not only guaranteed the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, but He also prophesied His own death. Remember that the God Who appeared to Abraham was the Word, Who later came in the flesh as Jesus Christ to die on the cross (John 1:1-14, Phil. 2:5-11). When He established the covenant with Abraham, He pledged to sacrifice His life! He bound Himself by a maledictory oath to fulfill the promises He had made to Abraham. Those promises could not be fulfilled through the Old Covenant with the children of Israel, which could bring only physical blessings. The promise of spiritual seed required a better covenant that would lead to eternal life. That covenant could only be ratified by the supreme sacrifice for sin—the death of the Son of God.

Hebrews 9 Confirms the Covenant Pledge

The words of Paul confirm that God pledged to sacrifice His life when He ratified His covenant with Abraham by a maledictory oath. In Hebrews 9, Paul presents a detailed explanation of this principle of covenantal law. Before we examine Paul's statements, we need to understand the error in the King James translation of a passage in this chapter. Because the translators of the King James Version did not understand covenantal law, they completely misinterpreted this passage in Scripture. The words that they chose for their translation do not apply to covenantal law but to testamental law. Here is the King James translation of this passage in Hebrews 9: "And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (verses 15-17, *KJV*).

The King James translation of Paul's words does not convey the meaning of the Greek text. The English word "testament" is translated from the Greek word *diatheekee*, which means "covenant." In earlier passages in this same epistle, *diatheekee* is correctly translated "covenant" (Heb. 8:6, 8, 9, 10 and 9:4). But in Hebrews 9:15, the translation abruptly switches from "covenant" to "testament," although the same Greek word *diatheekee* is used. *Diatheekee* is incorrectly translated "testament" in Verses 15 through 17. In every occurrence after Verse 17, *diatheekee* is properly translated "covenant." Moreover, in Paul's epistle to the Galatians, the King James translators have correctly translated *diatheekee* as "covenant" (Gal. 3:15, 17).

There is no justification in the Greek text for translating *diatheekee* as "testament." This incorrect translation of *diatheekee* in Hebrews 9:15-17 has led to much confusion and needless debate. A dissertation by John J. Hughes entitled Hebrews IX 15ff and Galatians 3:15ff, published in *Novum Testamentum*, shows the error in translating *diatheekee* as "testament." Hughes presents the proper interpretation of this passage according to covenantal law. As Hughes shows, covenantal law is placed in force upon the symbolic death of the ratifier by a maledictory oath. The covenant remains in force until the actual death of the ratifier. Unlike a will or testament, a covenant has no force when the ratifier is dead. Rather, the death of the ratifier extinguishes the covenant. While the ratifier is living, the covenant is binding and cannot be changed or altered in any way.

A testament follows the opposite principle. The terms of a last will and testament do not take effect until the death of the testator. Moreover, a will and testament can be changed at any time while the testator is living. The testator may add or delete beneficiaries any number of times. Because a will and testament can be changed by the testator, the beneficiaries have no assurance whatsoever that what has been written will be placed into effect. The inheritance that the beneficiary expects to receive may be given to others.

God, Who is faithful, does not alter His promises, as in testamental law. God uses only covenantal law, so that His promises are guaranteed to His people. When God establishes a covenant, the promises remain in full force and effect; they cannot be changed. The great difference between covenantal law and testamental law leaves no room for interchanging the terms "covenant" and "testament," as the translators of the King James Version have done. John J. Hughes clearly condemns their error: "Thus **to translate and interpret *diatheekee*** in [Hebrews] ix 16,17 **as 'testament' does great violence to the larger context** of the argument [which concerns the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant] from ix 1-x 18 [Hebrews 9:1-10:18]..." (*Novum Testamentum—An International Quarterly for New Testament and Related Studies, Vol. XXI, facs. 1*, p. 59, emphasis added).

In addition to mistranslating *diatheekee* as "testament," the King James translators committed a second error in Hebrews 9:17. Here is the translation of this verse in the *King James Version*: "For a testament [Greek *diatheekee*, meaning "covenant"] *is* of force **after men are dead**: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

The Greek word *diatheekee* shows that Paul is speaking of covenantal law, not of testamental law. However, the principle that is stated in this verse applies only to testamental law. This apparent contradiction is resolved when we understand that the phrase "after men are dead" is a gross mistranslation of the Greek text. This English phrase is translated from the Greek *epi nikrois*, which literally means "upon (or over) the dead ones." The words *epi nikrois* refer to the animals that were slain to ratify the covenant, not to the death of the ratifier. The phrase "*is* of force," translated

from the Greek *bebaia*, is also an incorrect translation. The word *bebaia* means "to establish, to confirm, or to make fixed" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). In Hebrews 9:17, *bebaia* should be translated "ratified."

Here is a more precise translation of the Greek text: "Now where *there is* a covenant, *it is* obligatory to bring forth [to represent] *a symbolic sacrifice to represent* the death of the one who personally ratifies *the* covenant [through a symbolic sacrifice]; because a covenant *is* ratified *only* over *the* dead *sacrificial* animals, since there is no way that it is legally in force until the living ratifier [covenant-maker] *has symbolically represented his death*" (Heb. 9:16-17).

When correctly translated, these verses clearly express the principles of covenantal law and the means by which covenants are made legally binding. The phrase *epi nikrois* ("over the dead ones") applies equally to the covenant between God and Abraham and to the covenant between God and Israel. Both covenants were confirmed, or ratified, over the bodies of sacrificial animals which represented the death of the ratifier/ratifiers. The following verses in Hebrews 9 describe the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel: "For this very reason [the requirement of a sacrifice to confirm or ratify a covenant], neither was the first *covenant* [the Old Covenant] inaugurated without blood because after Moses had spoken every commandment of *the* law to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, *and* he sprinkled both the book *of the covenant* itself and all the people, saying, 'This *is* the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you' " (verses 9:18-20).

As Paul shows, the Old Covenant was ratified over the dead bodies of calves and goats. The sacrifice of these animals fulfilled the requirements of covenantal law and gave the covenant full force and effect. After establishing this fact, Paul goes on to show that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ fulfilled the requirements for ratification of the New Covenant: "Therefore, *it was* obligatory *for* the patterns of the heavenly things [the vessels in the earthly sanctuary] to be purified with *the blood* of these *animals*, but [it was obligatory to purify] *the* things in heaven themselves [in the heavenly sanctuary] with superior sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered into the holy places made by *human* hands, *which are mere* copies of the true; rather, *He has entered* into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself many times, even as the high priest enters into the holy of holies year by year with *the* blood of others; for then it would have been necessary for Him to suffer many times since *the* foundation of *the* world. **But now, once and for all, in *the* consummation of the ages, He has been manifested for *the* purpose of removing sin through His sacrifice *of Himself*** (verses 9:23-26).

Genesis 15 Covenant Sacrifice and the Death of Jesus Christ

	Genesis 15	Death of Christ	
Sunset	Nisan 13 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Nisan 13 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Sunset
	Between the Two Evenings—*Ben ha arbayim*		
Night of 14th Passover Night	**Vs 4-5 Words of the covenant** Spiritual seed as the stars of heaven (Dan. 12:1-3, Mat. 13:43 1 John 3:1-3, Rev. 1:10-16) Midnight	New Covenant Passover instituted with foot washing, bread and wine Words of the New Covenant (John 13-17) Midnight	Night of 14th Passover Night
Sunrise	*Boqer*—Morning (Dawn)	Jesus Betrayed and Arrested Taken to Annas—Caiaphas *Boqer*—Morning (Dawn)	Sunrise
14th Day Passover Day	Time Frame Same as Christ **Vs 9-10 COVENANT SACRIFICE PREPARED** 3 year old heifer 3 year old she goat 3 year old ram Turtledove and pigeon The death of Jesus Christ portrayed **MALEDICTORY OATH** Unilateral oath of the death of God The burial of Jesus Christ portrayed Vs 12 Going down of sun Great darkness—type of death of Christ	TRIAL BEFORE PILATE BEATEN, SCOURGED JESUS LED AWAY - CARRIES OWN CROSS CRUCIFIED AT THIRD HOUR (9 AM) SEVEN SAYINGS OF JESUS **GREAT DARKNESS—SIXTH TO NINTH HOUR** **CHRIST DIES AT NINTH HOUR (3 PM)** Jesus' Body Wrapped in Linen and Put in Tomb Tomb Sealed at Sunset	14th Day Passover Day
Sunset	Nisan 14 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Nisan 14 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Sunset
	Between the Two Evenings—*Ben ha arbayim*		
Night of 15th 1st Day Fst Unlvnd Brd	Vs. 13-16 **COVENANT TO BRING ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT** Vs 17 After sundown—dark - type of tomb **God walked between the animal sacrifices** Vs 18 Oath to give the land to Abraham's seed Exodus 12:40-41, Israel begins exodus from Egypt the night of the 15th	**CHRIST'S FIRST NIGHT IN TOMB**	Night of 15th 1st Day Fst Unlvnd Brd
Sunrise	*Boqer*—Morning (Dawn)	*Boqer*—Morning (Dawn)	Sunrise
15th Day 1st Day Fst Unlvnd Brd	**ENTERING LAND ON SELFSAME DAY** Israel officially in the land (Josh. 5:11) The first wave sheaf offered Beginning of conquest of the land (completed by King David)	**CHRIST'S FIRST DAY IN TOMB**	15th Day 1st Day Fst Unlvnd Brd
Sunset	Nisan 15 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Nisan 15 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Sunset
	Nisan 16	Nisan 16	

Genesis 22 Sacrifice of Isaac and the Death of Jesus Christ

	Genesis 22	Death of Christ	
Sunset	Nisan 13 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Nisan 13 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	Sunset
	Between the Two Evenings—*Ben ha arbayim*		
		New Covenant Passover instituted with foot washing, bread and wine Words of the New Covenant (John 13-17) Midnight	Night of 14th Passover Night
	Vs 1-3 Three days before God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac	Jesus Betrayed and Arrested Taken to Annas—Caiaphas *Boqer*—Morning (Dawn)	Sunrise
	Vs 4 Abraham saw the place - took the fire Vs 6 Isaac carries the wood - type of cross Vs 9 Abraham built the altar - bound Isaac and put him on the altar Vs 10 Abraham took knife to slay Isaac Vs 11-14 God spared Isaac and supernaturally provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice A TYPE OF CHRIST - AS THE SUBSTITUTE SACRIFICE FOR SINNERS Vs 15-18 The promises were made unconditional	TRIAL BEFORE PILATE BEATEN, SCOURGED JESUS LED AWAY - CARRIES OWN CROSS CRUCIFIED AT THIRD HOUR (9 AM) SEVEN SAYINGS OF JESUS **GREAT DARKNESS—SIXTH TO NINTH HOUR** **CHRIST DIES AT NINTH HOUR (3 PM)** Jesus' Body Wrapped in Linen and Put in Tomb Tomb Sealed at Sunset Nisan 14 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	14th Day Passover Day Sunset
	Between the Two Evenings—*Ben ha arbayim*		
		CHRIST'S FIRST NIGHT IN TOMB *Boqer*—Morning (Dawn)	Night of 15th 1st Day Fst Unlvnd Brd Sunrise
		CHRIST'S FIRST DAY IN TOMB Nisan 15 ends *Ba erev* SUNSET	15th Day 1st Day Fst Unlvnd Brd Sunset
		Nisan 16	

The Covenant Pledge Foreshadows the New Covenant Sacrifice

By sacrificing His own body and blood, Jesus Christ fulfilled the requirements of covenantal law, confirming and ratifying the New Covenant. As the Mediator of the New Covenant, He offers redemption from sin and the gift of eternal life to all nations. Those who accept His sacrifice become the children of Abraham through faith, fulfilling the promise of spiritual seed. Remember that this promise was given to Abraham on the night of Nisan 14—the time that God had appointed for the Passover. On the same day, the animals for the covenant sacrifice were slain. The bloody sacrifice that Abraham was commanded to prepare, cutting those animals asunder, and making a path for God to pass between the parts, foreshadowed the agonizing death that Jesus Christ would die when He was beaten and crucified on the Passover day.

Abraham prepared his sacrifice during the very time that the flesh of Jesus Christ would be torn and mutilated by scourging and pierced by the nails of the cross. Here is Matthew's account of the timing of Jesus' suffering: "...after scourging Jesus, he delivered *Him* up so that He might be crucified....And they stripped Him *and* put a scarlet cloak around Him. And after platting a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head....Then, after spitting on Him, they took the rod and struck *Him* on the head. When they were done mocking Him, they...led Him away to crucify Him....Now from *the* sixth hour [noon] until *the* ninth hour [3 PM], darkness was over all the land. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'...And after crying out again with a loud voice, Jesus yielded up *His* spirit....And when evening was coming on, a rich man of Arimathea came, named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. After going to Pilate, he begged *to have* the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given over *to him*" (Matt. 27:26, 28-31, 45-46, 50, 57-58).

The suffering of Jesus Christ ended when He died on the afternoon of Nisan 14—the same time that Abraham completed his preparation of the covenant sacrifice. Notice the account in Genesis 15: "And when the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away. And it came to pass, as the sun was going down..." (verses 11-12). As the bloody bodies of the animals remained in place during the afternoon of the day, so Jesus' body remained on the cross. Near the end of the Passover day, Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus down, and Nicodemus came with burial spices. Together they wound burial linen around Jesus' body, wrapping the spices with the linen. They placed His body in the tomb as the sun was setting, ending the 14th day and beginning the 15th.

Jesus' burial in the tomb was foreshadowed by the deep sleep that Abraham experienced as the sun was going down. Notice: "And it came to pass, as when the sun was going down, that a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, behold, a horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Gen. 15:12).

After the sun had gone down, the God Who would become Jesus Christ in the flesh passed between the parts of the covenant sacrifice in a

maledictory oath, pledging His future death by the sacrifice of Himself to fulfill the promises of the covenant: "And it came to pass—**when the sun went down** [beginning the 15th] and **it was dark**—behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces" (Gen. 15:17).

This event occurred at the beginning of Nisan 15—the same time that Jesus' body was sealed in the darkness of the tomb. The Gospel of Luke confirms the time of Jesus' burial: "And behold, *there came* a man named Joseph [of Arimathea]...after going to Pilate, begged *for* the body of Jesus. And after taking it down, he wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb hewn in a rock, in which no one had ever been laid. **Now it was *a* preparation day, and *a* Sabbath** [the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] was coming on [at sundown]" (Luke 23:50-54). Jesus' body was placed in the tomb as the sun was setting, ending the 14th and beginning the 15th. By the time the sun had set, the tomb had been sealed by rolling a huge stone over the entrance. That night—the night of Nisan 15—was the beginning of Jesus' three-day burial in the heart of the earth.

True to the maledictory oath of His covenant with Abraham, the God of the Old Testament sacrificed His life to raise up the spiritual seed that He had promised. As God in the flesh, Jesus died to ratify the New Covenant and secure the promise of eternal life for the spiritual seed who would be added throughout all ages. He sacrificed His body and blood on the Passover day—the 14th of Nisan—and He was in the tomb when the 15th day began. By His **one perfect sacrifice**, Jesus Christ atoned for **all sin forever**. After three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, He was raised from the dead and restored to His former glory. At that time, He became the Mediator of the New Covenant—the **one and only** Mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5).

The New Covenant Offers Sanctification from Sin

The spiritual priesthood of Jesus Christ, which ministers eternal life through the New Covenant, is far more glorious than the earthly priesthood of the Old Covenant, which offered animal sacrifices at the tabernacle and the temple. The animal sacrifices from the flock and the herd were instituted to point out the sins of the people. These sacrifices were repeated year after year because the people continued to sin. No animal sacrifice could remove their sins by purifying their hearts. The only sacrifice that could remove sin and bring spiritual perfection was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was prophesied for a future time. The whole history of the Old Testament reveals the need for the TRUE SACRIFICE.

When their hearts were hardened by sin, the children of Israel lost sight of the purpose of the animal sacrifices. As a result, the sacrifices degenerated into mere ritual with no meaning whatsoever. The words of the prophet Isaiah show that God was not pleased with these sacrifices: " 'To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?' says the LORD; 'I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I do not delight in *the blood of* bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats' " (Isa. 1:11).

Worse yet, some tried to cover their sins by using the earthly temple with its sacrificial system to justify themselves before God. The sacrifices that they offered were an abomination, because there was no reverence for God in their hearts. Here is God's scathing rebuke for their self-willed and unrepentant attitudes: "He that kills an ox *is as if* he killed a man; he who sacrifices a lamb *is as if* he broke a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering *is as if* he offered swine's blood; he who burns incense *is as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and I will bring their fears upon them because **when I called, no one answered; when I spoke, they did not hear. But they did evil before My eyes and chose *that* in which I did not delight**" (Isa. 66:3-4).

Although these offerings were part of the sacrificial system that God had instituted, He rejected them because they were offered in an unrepentant attitude of pride and self-will. God does not accept such sacrifices, just as He did not accept the sacrifice of Cain because Cain's heart was not right before Him (Gen. 4:5-7). God the Father desires a repentant, yielded heart and mind: "Thus says the LORD, 'The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* My footstool. Where, then, *is* the house that you build for Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,' says the LORD. 'But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My word" (Isa. 66:1-2).

King David understood that God desires a humble and contrite heart. Being a prophet, he foresaw a time when animal sacrifices, which could not purge the stubborn and rebellious heart of man, would be replaced by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. Then I said, 'Lo, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me; I delight to do Your will, O My God; and Your law is within my heart' " (Psa. 40:6-8).

The one perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ has accomplished what all the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant could not do. By offering His own body and blood, Jesus Christ established the New Covenant, which removes sin through sanctification of the heart: "In the saying above, *He said*, 'Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin (which are offered according to the law) You did not desire nor delight in'; then He said, 'Lo, I come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first *covenant* in order that He may establish the second *covenant*; by Whose will **we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**.

"Now every high priest stands ministering day by day, offering the same sacrifices repeatedly, which are never able to remove sins; but He, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at *the* right hand of God. Since that time, He is waiting until His enemies are placed *as* a footstool for His feet. **For by one offering He has obtained eternal perfection *for* those who are sanctified**" (Heb. 10:8-14).

The sacrificial system of the Old Covenant could not purify the stubborn and sinful hearts of the people. Only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can

purify the heart and remove sin. Through faith in His one perfect sacrifice, all may enter the New Covenant and be redeemed from the power of sin. They are symbolically crucified with Christ, putting to death the old nature of sin, and rising with Him in newness of life: "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live. *Indeed*, it is no longer I; but Christ lives in me. For *the life* that I am now living in *the* flesh, I live by faith—that *very faith* of the Son of God [Christ's own faith imparted to him], Who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The relationship of the individual believer with Jesus Christ and God the Father through the New Covenant is far superior to the relationship between God and the children of Israel under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant relationship begins when each believer repents of sin and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). The believer is granted reconciliation with God the Father and receives direct access to His throne through Jesus Christ as High Priest. God the Father then bestows the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believer. The Holy Spirit imparts the mind of God and inscribes His laws in the believer's heart: "And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after He had previously said, 'This *is* the covenant that I will establish with them after those days [the days of the ministry of Jesus Christ],' says *the* Lord: 'I will give My laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds; and their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again' " (Heb. 10:15-17).

Contrary to the teaching of many ministers and theologians, the New Covenant does not abolish the commandments and laws of God. The Scriptures teach the opposite! Under the New Covenant, the laws of God are inscribed in the heart, and bondage to sin is abolished. The believer is no longer enslaved to the sinful nature of the flesh, but is empowered to overcome sin through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God—the same Spirit that enabled Jesus Christ to live without sin: "However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. But if Christ *be* within you, the body *is* indeed dead because of sin [crucified with Christ]; however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness [raised with Christ to walk in newness of life]. Now if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the* dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the* dead will also quicken your mortal bodies [transform them to immortal spirit at the resurrection] because of His Spirit that dwells within you.

"So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to *the* flesh; because if you are living according to *the* flesh, you shall die; but if by *the* Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are *the* sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him" (Rom. 8:9-17).

The spiritual begettal that makes the believer a child of God enables him or her to resist the temptations of the flesh and to obey God from the heart. Each believer who walks in daily obedience to His laws is being conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ, with the promise that he or she will, like Him, be resurrected to eternal life (Rom. 8:29). The promise of glory and immortality for the children of God is guaranteed by the New Covenant and is being accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is granted to all who accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The Circumcision of the New Covenant Is of the Heart

The circumcision of the flesh, which was instituted as a token of the covenant between God and Abraham, foreshadowed the future circumcision of the heart through the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, circumcision of all males was mandatory, and any male who was not circumcised could not partake of the Passover. When Jesus Christ established the New Covenant, the circumcision of the flesh was superseded by the circumcision of the heart.

Even under the Old Covenant, the circumcision of the heart was more important to God than circumcision of the flesh: "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *belong* to the LORD your God, the earth also, with all that is in it. Only the LORD had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, you above all people, as *it is* today.

"**Therefore, circumcise the foreskin of your heart**, and be no longer stiff-necked, for the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, the mighty and awesome God Who does not respect persons nor take a bribe" (Deut. 10:12-17).

Under the New Covenant, circumcision of the flesh is not required by God and has no spiritual significance: "For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, neither *is* that circumcision which *is* external in *the* flesh; rather, he *is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly, and circumcision *is* of *the* heart, in *the* spirit *and* not in *the* letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

When the Jews in Old Testament times turned from the commandments of God and began to practice the traditions of men, they exalted the sign of circumcision. But this physical token did not justify their sins before God. As the apostle Paul shows, willing obedience to the commandments of God is far more important than the condition of the flesh: "*For* circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; rather, the keeping of God's commandments *is essential*" (I Cor. 7:19).

In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul reveals that spiritual circumcision takes place in the heart of each believer who has been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ: "For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of all principality and power in Whom **you have also been circumcised with *the* circumcision not made by hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh **by the circumcision of Christ**; **having been buried with Him in baptism**, by which you have also been raised with *Him* through the inner working of God, Who raised Him from the dead. For you, who were *once* dead in *your* sins and in the **uncircumcision of your flesh**, He has *now* made alive with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses" (Col. 2:9-13).

The circumcision that leads to eternal life is not of the flesh but of the heart. Through faith in Jesus Christ, every sinner can be reconciled to God and receive the begettal of the Holy Spirit, which is the true circumcision of the heart. It is this circumcision—not the circumcision of the flesh—that is required to participate in the New Covenant and in its annual renewal at the Christian Passover. This ceremony is a memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to ratify the New Covenant in order to fulfill the promises that were given to Abraham.

Jesus established the New Covenant on the night of Nisan 14, the same night that He had delivered the promise of spiritual seed to Abraham. The New Covenant is fulfilling this promise by offering salvation from sin and the gift of eternal life to those whom God calls from every nation. All who enter the New Covenant through faith in Jesus Christ are commanded to observe the Christian Passover each year on the night of Nisan 14.

Although the Passover of the New Covenant is observed on the day that God ordained for the Passover of the Old Covenant, the Passover ceremony was profoundly changed by Jesus Christ. The Christian Passover does not commemorate the deliverance of the firstborn of Israel from death, but the deliverance of repentant sinners from eternal death. Because Jesus Christ purchased full redemption from sin with His own body and blood, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb is no longer necessary. The ordinances that Jesus Christ instituted for the Christian Passover are the footwashing ceremony and the new symbols of the bread and the wine, which represent His body and His blood.

In Chapter Twenty-Five, we will learn the meaning of the footwashing ceremony and the reason that Jesus Christ commands all true Christians to participate in this ordinance.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE ORDINANCE OF FOOTWASHING

The Gospel of John shows that the observance of the Christian Passover includes the ordinance of footwashing. Jesus Christ instituted the footwashing before instituting the bread and the wine as the symbols of His body and His blood. As Jesus commands us to partake of the bread and the wine, so He commands us to participate in the footwashing. The footwashing ceremony is essential to understanding our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another as Christians under the New Covenant. We can learn many lessons from this simple but profound ceremony.

The disciples of Jesus Christ needed to learn these lessons. In the days before Jesus' last Passover, the spirit of competition and self-exaltation was stirred up among the disciples, causing strife over who would be the greatest. The mother of John and James put herself into the very middle of this argument. She personally petitioned Jesus to grant her sons the seats at His right and left hand in His kingdom (Matt. 20:20-23). After reproving James and John for seeking to exalt themselves over their brethren, Jesus taught His disciples a vital lesson in humility:

"And after hearing *this*, the ten were indignant against the two brothers. But Jesus had called them to *Him and* said, 'You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them [the masses of people under their dominion], and the great ones [the exalted religious leaders] exercise authority over them. However, it shall not be this way among you; but whoever would become great among you, **let him be your servant**; and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave [bondman]; just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as* a ransom for many' " (Matt. 20:24-28).

At His last Passover, Jesus taught this lesson of humility and service by assuming one of the lowest duties of a slave. He washed the disciples' feet. This lowly act of service by Jesus reveals the love and humility of God Himself. Because this service was customarily performed by servants, Peter protested when Jesus began to wash his feet. He did not think it proper for Jesus to do such a lowly task and boldly declared that he would never allow it. Notice Jesus' response: "Jesus answered him, '**If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me**.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head.' Jesus said to him, 'The one who has been washed does not need to wash *anything other* than the feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all.' For He knew the one who was betraying Him; this was the reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean' " (John 13:8-11).

Jesus' answer to Peter holds another vital lesson for Christians. To participate in the New Covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, we must submit to His will in everything. The next words that Jesus spoke clearly

reveal His will concerning the footwashing: "Therefore, when He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, *and* had sat down again, He said to them, '**Do you know what I have done to you?** You call Me the Teacher and the Lord, and you speak rightly, because I am. Therefore, **if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also are duty-bound to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, *to show* that you also should do exactly as I have done to you.**

"Truly, truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, nor a messenger greater than he who sent him. **If you know these things, blessed are you IF YOU DO THEM**' " (verses 12-17).

Jesus commanded all who profess Him as their Lord to participate in the footwashing ceremony of the Christian Passover. The words that He spoke to Peter show that our participation is essential to the New Covenant relationship. A closer look at the words of Jesus in the Greek text will enable us to fully understand the importance of participating in the footwashing.

What Does it Mean to have a Part with Jesus Christ?

Jesus told Peter, "**Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me**." These words have a profound meaning for every Christian. The English word "part" is translated from the Greek word *meros*, which means "a part of something—as a component, a matter, a standing, a share, a place with someone" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Having a part with Jesus Christ means partaking of the blessings of the New Covenant, which offers fellowship with Jesus Christ and God the Father in this life and the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. During Jesus' last Passover, He promised His disciples a specific reward in the kingdom of God: "Now you are the ones who have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint to you, as My Father has appointed to Me, a kingdom; so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and may sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30).

The disciples understood that having a part with Jesus meant ruling with Him in the kingdom of God. They also knew that Jesus had called them to have a part in the ministry of preaching the gospel during the present age. As His apostles, they would be sent to the twelve tribes of Israel, which were scattered abroad (Jas. 1:1), and to all nations in the world (Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20). When Judas Iscariot proved unfaithful to his calling, the eleven remaining disciples were inspired by the Holy Spirit to select a replacement for Judas in order to have twelve founding apostles. The selection of Matthias by lot completed the number (Acts 1:15-26). When we examine the account in the book of Acts, it is clear that Matthias received a part in the ministry of the apostles: "And they prayed, saying, 'You, Lord, *the* Knower of the hearts of all, show which one of these two You have personally chosen **to receive the part** [Greek *kleeros*, "lot" or "part," often

used in connection with *meros*] **of this ministry and apostleship**..." (verses 24-25).

This record in the book of Acts clarifies the meaning of Jesus' words to Peter during the footwashing. When Jesus told Peter that He must wash his feet or Peter would have no part with Him, Peter understood that he was in danger of losing his apostleship. No wonder Peter responded by saying, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head." Peter may have been referring to the priestly requirements for washing and bathing before serving at the tabernacle (Ex. 30:17-21; Lev. 16:1-4).

For Peter, having a part with Jesus included having a share in His ministry with the other apostles. After becoming an apostle, Peter rebuked Simon Magus, a sorcerer at Samaria who was revered as a religious leader, for attempting to buy an apostleship. Peter's condemnation of Simon shows that his evil and covetous heart disqualified him not only from an apostleship but from any part in the ministry of Jesus Christ: "May your money be destroyed with you because you thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money. You have neither [Greek *ouk*, the impossibility of such a thing] **part** [Greek *meros*] nor **lot** [Greek *kleeros*] in this matter [ministry]; for your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:20-21). Simon Magus was excluded from any part in the ministry of Jesus Christ, which he had sought to use for his own evil purposes (verses 22-23).

Having a part with Jesus Christ does not refer exclusively to serving in the ministry. The New Testament teaches that everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ has a part, or *meros*, with Him. All who have a part with Jesus Christ now will also have a part in the first resurrection, which will take place at His return. They will be raised to immortality and will reign with Christ during the millennium: "Blessed and holy is **the one who has part** [Greek *meros*] in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

The resurrection to immortality at the return of Jesus Christ is the hope and goal of every true Christian. Having a part in that resurrection is symbolized by the act of water baptism. The apostle Paul shows how the symbolic burial and resurrection of baptism leads to a part in the first resurrection: "Therefore, if you were raised [out of the watery grave of baptism] together with Christ, seek the things that are above [your part with Christ], where Christ is sitting at *the* right hand of God. Set your affection on the things that are above, and not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died [to the old nature, as symbolized by baptism], and your life has been hid together with Christ in God. When Christ, *Who is* our life, is manifested, then you also shall be manifested with Him in glory [your eternal part with Christ]" (Col. 3:1-4).

To have a part with Jesus Christ and share His likeness for eternity, we must learn to be like Him in this life. If we share in the sufferings that He experienced, striving to overcome the fleshly nature of sin, we also will

be glorified as the sons of God: "To the one who thirsts, I will give freely of the fountain of the water of life. The one who overcomes [who gains the victory over sin through the power of the Holy Spirit] shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:6-7). What a glorious destiny! Those who overcome sin in the flesh will receive eternal life as the glorified sons and daughters of God!

In order to be glorified as the children of God, we must love God with all our heart and be keeping His commandments. Those who make a practice of breaking the commandments are showing that they do not love Jesus Christ and God the Father (John 14:15, 23-24; I John 5:3). Their disobedience will lead to a part in the lake of fire: "But *the* cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have **their part [Greek *meros*] in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is *the* second death**" (Rev. 21:8).

You, as an individual, must choose day by day to live in obedience to the commandments of God. If you choose to live in sin, you will not have a part with Jesus Christ, and your end will come in the lake of fire. There is no middle ground! Those who claim to be serving Jesus, but are indulging in sinful practices, should take heed to His warning: "But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delays *his* coming,' and shall begin to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken [Rev. 17:1-6]; the lord of that servant will come in a day that he does not expect, and in an hour that he does not know. And he shall cut him asunder and shall appoint his **portion** [Greek *meros*, a part] with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:48-51). If they ignore His warning, they will have a part with Satan and the demons in the lake of fire: "...Depart from Me, *you* cursed ones, into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

Every individual who wants a part with Jesus Christ, now and in the kingdom of God, must be keeping the commandments of God. Jesus Himself shows who will have a part in His kingdom: " 'And behold, I am coming quickly; and My reward [portions for His servants (Matt. 25:14-30)] is with Me, to render to each one **according as his work shall be**. I am Alpha and Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last.' Blessed *are* those who are **keeping His commandments**, that they may have the right to *eat of* the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. But excluded [having no part] *are* dogs [male prostitutes], and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and everyone who loves and devises a lie....For I jointly testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, *that* if anyone adds to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of *the* book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part [Greek *meros*] from *the* book of life**, and from the holy city, and from the things [the blessings and promises of God] that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:12-15, 18-19).

To have a part with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God, we must first accept His sacrifice as payment for our sins. Then we must show that we love Him by keeping His commandments, without adding to them or taking

away from them. Having a part with Jesus Christ requires total and complete obedience—with no variations or exceptions. That is why Jesus required Peter to participate in the footwashing. That is also why Jesus did not wash Peter's hands or his head, as Peter requested. In Peter's enthusiasm to follow Jesus, it seemed right to him to have his hands and head washed, as well as his feet. But Jesus did not allow Peter to add to or take from what He was doing. Jesus washed only his feet. Jesus showed Peter that in order to have **a part with Him**, he must conform to Jesus' way. Only by submitting to His way could Peter qualify to serve as an apostle and make disciples of others.

As Peter learned to submit to Jesus Christ, so must we. We must learn to follow Him, conforming our lives to His teaching and His way, in order to have **a part with Him**. We cannot add to or take from what Jesus commanded. Jesus' command to wash one another's feet during the Christian Passover is no exception. Even if we consider it the least of His commands, we are required to obey His words and to follow His example.

Footwashing and Spiritual Cleansing

When we examine the words that Jesus spoke concerning the footwashing, we find a direct reference to the spiritual cleansing that takes place when repentant believers are baptized. Notice Jesus' statement to Peter: "The one who has been washed does not need to wash *anything other* than the feet" (John 13:10). The phrase "has been washed" is translated from the Greek word *louoo*, which means "to wash, as a rule the whole body; to bathe, of religious washings...with the allusion to the cleansing of the whole body in baptism" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Other uses of the Greek word *louoo* in the New Testament show that Jesus was not referring to washing as in a bath, but to the washing of baptism. This same word is used by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 10: "Let us approach *God* [the Father in heaven above, with Jesus at His right hand] with a true heart, with full conviction of faith, our hearts having been purified [sanctified by the blood of Christ] from a wicked conscience, and **our bodies having been washed [Greek *louoo*] with pure water** [the cleansing waters of baptism]" (Heb. 10:22). Paul's words to Titus leave no doubt that he is referring to the washing of baptism, which brings spiritual cleansing: "...according to His mercy He saved us, through *the* washing [Greek *louoo*] of regeneration and *the* renewing of *the* Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

The apostle Peter shows that baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is a requirement for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, Peter was inspired to proclaim, "Repent and be baptized [by full immersion in water] each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

The twelve apostles, who had repented and been baptized in the days of Jesus' ministry, were the first to receive the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Their inspired preaching led many others to believe and be baptized (verses 41-42). These all received the gift of the Holy Spirit

by the laying on of hands, as did other believers who were added in the following months (Acts 8:15-17). The conversion of Saul, who became the apostle Paul, took place during this time (Acts 9:1-6). In testifying of his conversion before the unbelieving Jews, Paul repeated the words of Ananias, who had laid hands on him: "The God of our fathers has personally chosen you to know His will, and to see the Just One, and to hear *the* voice of His mouth; for you shall be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you delay? Arise and **be baptized, and wash [Greek *louoo*] away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:14-16).

The word "baptize" is translated from the Greek *baptizoo*, which means "dip, immerse, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Baptism requires complete immersion in water because it symbolizes the burial of the old, sinful nature. The believer who desires to be cleansed from sin must be baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, symbolically dying to the old nature of sin. The believer is raised from the watery grave to walk in newness of life: "Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were **buried** with Him through **baptism** into **the death** [dying to the old nature]; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should **walk in newness of life**" (Rom. 6:3-4).

The New Testament makes it very clear that baptism by full immersion in water is required of every believer who has repented of sin. A so-called "baptism" by sprinkling water on the head of a person is not the baptism that is commanded in the New Testament! Because baptism represents the burial of the old, sinful self in a watery grave, it can be compared to the burial of a dead person. A dead person is not buried by sprinkling a little dirt on the corpse. The dead are placed in graves and are completely covered with earth. In the same manner as a dead person is placed in the grave and completely covered with earth, the one who is baptized must be completely covered with water by immersion.

Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for the sins of every human being, His death is accepted by God the Father in the stead of each repentant sinner who is baptized. Baptism is the outward manifestation of the sinner's repentance and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and cleansing of the heart. The spiritual cleansing that takes place at baptism frees each one from the penalty for sin, which is death, and enables him or her to receive the gift of eternal life from God the Father (verse 23). The symbolic death of baptism is the maledictory oath by which each believer enters the New Covenant, which offers the promise of eternal life.

The Greek text refers to baptism as **"the baptism,"** because it is **the burial of the repentant sinner into the covenant death of Jesus Christ**, showing that he or she has accepted the death of Jesus Christ as payment for his or her sins: "Knowing this, that our old man [the old, sinful nature] **was co-crucified with *Him***, in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that

we might no longer be enslaved to sin; because the one who has died *to sin* [the symbolic death of baptism] has been justified from sin" (Rom. 6:5-7).

It is this spiritual cleansing through the death of the old nature of sin that Jesus was referring to when He said, "The one who has been washed..." (John 13:10). This reference to baptism during the footwashing ceremony of the Christian Passover is most significant. Jesus was showing that participation in the footwashing confirms that the believer has been cleansed from sin and has died to the old nature. The death of the old, sinful self is the beginning of a new way of life, which is symbolized by being raised out of the watery grave. The believer who has symbolically died and been raised with Jesus Christ has entered the New Covenant, through which the laws of God are written in his or her heart. Each one has come under the blood of the New Covenant, which guarantees the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling the believer to obey God from the heart.

When a believer is co-joined in the death of Jesus Christ at baptism, he or she is pledging to faithfully keep the commandments of Jesus Christ and God the Father, which are the words of the New Covenant. Each one who remains faithful unto death will be resurrected to eternal life and glory. But those who forsake the teachings of Jesus Christ will be removed from the grace of God under the New Covenant. If they refuse to repent, they will suffer the judgment of eternal death in the lake of fire.

To be resurrected to immortality, we must continue to walk in the new way of life that begins at baptism. This newness of life is symbolized by the footwashing ceremony of the Christian Passover. As we participate in the footwashing each year, we are renewing our pledge to walk in the new way of life that God has ordained for us (Eph. 2:10). Since we have already been wholly washed by the waters of baptism, we need only to wash our feet as a renewal of our pledge.

What tremendous meaning there is in the footwashing ceremony of the Christian Passover! When we wash one other's feet as Jesus commanded, we are rededicating ourselves to walk in God's way of life. As we seek to walk in His way, we will be led by the Holy Spirit to resist the sinful desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The Holy Spirit will impart the love of God and will motivate us to keep His commandments: "And this is the love *of God*: that we **walk according to His commandments**..." (II John 6). We will be learning to live by every word of God, which is truth: "For I rejoiced exceedingly at the coming of *the* brethren *who* testified of you in the truth, even how you are walking in truth. I do not have any greater joy than these *testimonies* that I am hearing—that my children are **walking in truth**" (III John 3-4). As we walk in the light of God's Word, the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from every sin (I John 1:7).

This spiritual cleansing, which we receive through the blood of the New Covenant, is symbolized by the footwashing ceremony of the Christian Passover. By participating in the footwashing, we confirm our desire to remain under the New Covenant, and we renew our pledge to love God and keep His commandments and walk in His Truth.

Footwashing and True Humility

As we follow the example of Jesus Christ by washing one another's feet, we are also learning **the lesson of humility that Jesus taught His disciples**: "Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as* a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Jesus spoke these words a few days before His last Passover. On the night of the Passover, before He was betrayed, He instituted the ceremony of footwashing. By washing His disciples' feet, He demonstrated the attitude of service and humility that He requires of all who profess to follow Him. When He had finished washing the disciples' feet, He told them, "You call Me the Teacher and the Lord, and you speak rightly, because I am.... Truly, truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, nor a messenger greater than he who sent him" (John 13:13, 16).

This vital lesson in humility applies to every servant of Jesus Christ. No one who is truly serving Jesus Christ, as a messenger bringing the Word of God, is ever to be exalted above the brethren. These words of Jesus clearly show that any man who claims to sit in the seat of God, as an exalted pontiff, is not a true servant of Jesus Christ!

The apostle Paul did not exalt himself above the brethren. Rather, he followed the example of Jesus Christ and taught others to practice the same humility. Paul wrote, "*Let* nothing *be* done through [motivated by] contention or vainglory, but **in humility**, each esteeming the others above himself. Let each one look not *only* after his own things, but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus; Who, although He existed [pre-existed] in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but **emptied Himself** [giving up His glory as God], *and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant; and being found in *the* manners of man, **HE HUMBLED HIMSELF**, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross" (Phil. 2:3-8).

The apostle John also wrote of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ as God (John 1:1-3, 14). John knew that Jesus had given up His power, His glory and His immortality to become a man, made in the likeness of human flesh, for the purpose of becoming the perfect sacrifice of God the Father for the forgiveness of sins—our sins and those of the entire world (I John 2:2). There can be no greater act of humility and service than this!

Jesus Christ washed the disciples' feet to demonstrate His attitude of true humility. Then He told them, "Therefore, **if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also are duty-bound to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, *to show* that you also should do exactly as I have done to you....If you know these things, blessed are you IF YOU DO THEM**" (John 13:14-15, 17).

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, said that His followers are duty-bound to wash one another's feet. If we are truly following Jesus Christ, we

will participate in the footwashing ceremony of the Christian Passover, as Jesus commanded. Jesus Christ promises that we will be blessed if we obey His command to wash one another's feet.

As the New Testament shows, footwashing was a common practice in the early churches of God. One of the qualifications for a widow to receive church assistance was that "she has washed the saints' feet" (I Tim. 5:10). However, it appears that in the last years of the apostle John, when many of the early churches were falling away from the teachings of Jesus Christ, the practice of footwashing was being neglected. That would explain why the apostle John, who wrote his Gospel many years after the other Gospels, relates the footwashing at Jesus' last Passover in great detail. Without the testimony of John, we would not have the knowledge to keep this very vital part of the Christian Passover.

Jesus Christ commands us to observe the footwashing ceremony for the following reasons:

1) To have a part with Him now and in the kingdom of God for eternity
2) To renew our baptismal pledge to walk in the way of God
3) To learn the lesson of humility and loving service

Remember what Jesus said on His last Passover night: "If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments" (John 14:15). One of His commandments is to wash one another's feet at the Christian Passover. Are you willing to observe the Christian Passover according to the commands of Jesus Christ? Or will you follow the commandments and traditions of men? The way of men does not lead to eternal life, but to death, as the Scriptures warn: "There is a way which seems right to a man, **but the end thereof *is* the way of death**" (Prov. 14:12). The choice is yours!

After instituting the footwashing at His last Passover, Jesus Christ instituted the ordinances of the bread and the wine. In the next chapter, we will learn the meaning of the second ordinance of the Christian Passover—partaking of the bread as a symbol of the body of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE MEANING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST

God has manifested His great love to the world by sending His Son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind from sin. The fullness of God's love is revealed in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Who willingly gave Himself for the salvation of every human being. But we as individuals must personally choose to accept salvation by repenting and believing: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that **everyone who believes in Him** may not perish, but **may have everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

This verse is perhaps the most memorized verse in the New Testament. But while many are able to recite this verse, few comprehend its profound meaning. Very few truly understand the awesome sacrifice that God the Father provided in the body of Jesus Christ. The magnitude of His suffering was foretold by Jesus Christ Himself at His last Passover. After breaking the unleavened bread, He said, "Take, eat; this is My body, which *is* being broken for you. This do in the remembrance of Me" (I Cor. 11:24).

Why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have to offer Himself for the sins of mankind? Was there no other way to bring salvation to the world? Could not God have removed sin simply by issuing a command?

Because God is the Creator of all things and the Supreme Ruler of the universe, people tend to think that God accomplishes everything by speaking a command. It is true that God created this present world, with all its plant and animal life, by the commands of His mouth. But God did not choose to create man in this manner. Instead, God formed man with His own hands, creating him in His own image and giving him the capacity of independent, free choice. Unlike the animals, which are ruled by instinct, human beings are able to discern right from wrong and to choose their own course of action. Having the ability to choose allows every human being the opportunity to sin. As the record of man's history shows, that is the path that human beings have chosen from the beginning. It is for this very reason that Jesus Christ gave His life. Only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, could redeem mankind from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death. In order to understand the necessity of His supreme sacrifice for sin, we must first understand the binding power of the laws of God. These laws express the very nature of God, Who is altogether righteous and perfect in character. A study of the nature of God will help us to better understand why man's transgressions of His laws required the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The Nature of God

The nature of God is revealed in the many names of God that are found in Scripture. The book *The Names of God* by Andrew Jukes offers an excellent study of the Scriptural names of God and their meanings. A brief overview of the characteristics and nature of God is presented here. The

Scriptural references that are provided may be used as a basis for pursuing an in-depth study of the nature of God, should the reader desire. Any reliable concordance would be helpful.

God is Spirit (John 4:24). God is eternal, ever-living and self-existent (Deut. 33:27, Isa. 40:28). God is Light (I John 1:5). God is holy (Isa. 57:15). God is Creator (Gen. 1, John 1:1-4). God is Lawgiver and Judge (Jas. 4:12, Isa. 33:22). God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). God is the Savior of all (Psa. 106:21, Isa. 43:3; 45:21-22; 60:16, Hosea 13:4, John 4:42, I Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10, Tit. 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6, I John 4:14). God is our Redeemer from sin (Psa. 19:14, Isa. 41:14; 49:26, I Pet. 1:18-19, Rev. 5:9).

God is both Lawgiver and the Judge of all who break His laws. He is also the Savior and Redeemer of those who repent of their sins and transgressions of His laws. These two aspects of God's nature are clearly revealed in the words that He spoke when Moses was allowed to see His glory: " 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live....Behold, *there is* a place by Me, and you shall stand upon a rock. And it will be, while My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. And I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back parts. But My face shall not be seen'....And the LORD [Jehovah, the covenant name] came down in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God [Elohim, the Creator], merciful [Psa. 103:8-18; 119:64; 136] and gracious [Psa. 86:15; 111:4; 112:4; 116:5, I Pet. 2:3] longsuffering [Rom. 2:4, I Tim. 1:16], and abundant in goodness [Psa. 31:19; 33:5; 107:8, 15, 21, 31, Rom. 2:4] and truth [Deut. 32:4, Psa. 31:5; 33:4, Jer. 4:2, John 14:6], keeping mercy to the thousandth *generation*, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin [Psa. 103:1-4, Acts 2:38; 3:19, Rom. 3:23-25], but Who will by no means clear *the guilty,* visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children...to the fourth generation' " (Ex. 33:20-23; 34:5-7).

Because God is merciful and gracious, He is ready to forgive the sins of the repentant. But because He is holy and righteous, He does not allow the unrepentant to escape judgment. As the righteous Judge of all, God punishes those who do evil and destroys the unrepentant wicked. The ultimate, awesome judgment of God will be poured out on the wicked at the return of Jesus Christ: "But the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the works of their hands, that they might not worship demons, and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which do not have the power to see, nor to hear, nor to walk. And **they did not repent** of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thievery" (Rev. 9:20-21).

The book of Revelation gives a graphic description of the seven last plagues of God, which will be poured out upon the earth just before the return of Jesus Christ. Even after these terrible plagues, the wicked will refuse to repent: "And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; yet they **did not repent** of their works" (Rev. 16:11). The final destruction of the unrepentant wicked will come in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8).

In warning the wicked of his ultimate judgment, God shows that He takes no pleasure in executing it: " '*As* I live,' says the Lord GOD, '**I have no delight in the death of the wicked, except that the wicked turn from his way, and live.** Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; **for why will you die, O house of Israel?**' " (Ezek. 33:11.)

Think about these words of God! The Lord says, "**AS I LIVE....**" His proclamation is based on His very existence! Because God is love, He does not delight in the death of the wicked. It is God's desire that every sinner repent and be saved: "...[God] is long-suffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). However, the gift of eternal life is granted only to those who repent of their sins and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish [die forever], but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ is offered to all people and nations on earth. Everyone who responds to God's call to repentance and who is baptized will receive the gift of salvation through the begettal of the Holy Spirit from God the Father (Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:47-48, Acts 2:38-39, Rom. 1:5-6, Rev. 7:9-10). God's desire is to grant salvation and eternal life to all humanity. This is the very reason that Jesus Christ sacrificed His life—to take away the sins of the world!

So great was the love of God the Father that He gave His own Son to redeem mankind from sin. So strong was the love of God in the Son that He gave Himself willingly, taking upon His own body the punishment that man's sins had incurred. The love of God is His greatest attribute and characteristic: "**GOD IS LOVE**" (I John 4:8, 16). Everything that God does flows from His love.

As human beings, we can have or possess love, but **GOD IS LOVE!** In His great love, God wants every human being to be in His kingdom. But God, Who is perfect in righteousness, cannot dwell with sin. It is not possible to have the love of God where sin is allowed to exist. That is why sin, rebellion and wickedness must be destroyed. When we fully understand the nature of God, we can comprehend why the judgment of eternal death must be executed against the incorrigibly wicked. Only the righteous will inherit eternal life.

Since all human beings have sinned, there is not one who is righteous before God (Psa. 14:2-3, Rom. 3:9-10). But through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, every sinner who repents can be cleansed from sin and be reconciled to God the Father. The blood of Jesus Christ sanctifies each repentant believer, who is then justified and counted righteous before God. This righteousness continues to be imputed as each believer remains under the blood of Jesus Christ by living in daily obedience to God and repenting of any sins that are committed. Every human being has the potential to be justified before God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to live forever in the kingdom of God.

None of the other creatures on earth have the ultimate destiny of becoming the glorified children of God for all eternity. No other creature has been created in the image and likeness of God, with the potential to be transformed to immortal spirit beings. This special blessing and privilege is granted only to human beings!

God's Love in Creating Mankind

The magnitude of God's love is revealed in the creation of man. All human beings bear the image and likeness of God: " '**Let Us** make man **in Our image, after Our likeness;** and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth'....And God created man in **His *own* image, in the image of God** He created him. He created them male and female" (Gen. 1:26-27).

These verses give us more understanding about the nature of God. The word "God" is translated from the Hebrew Elohim, which is a plural noun. Like English plural nouns, Hebrew plural nouns refer to more than one person or thing. Just as the plural noun "men" inherently means more than one man, Elohim means more than a single God. A number of passages in the Old Testament confirm the existence of more than one Divine Being (Gen. 1:26; 11:7, Psa. 110:1; 45:7-8, Dan. 7:13).

The Scriptures reveal that there are two who are Elohim. One Elohim is the God Who is called the Father in the New Testament. The other Elohim is the God Who became Jesus Christ. This truth is verified by the apostle John:

"In *the* beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**. He was in *the* beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and not even one *thing* that was created came into being without Him. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men....and the **Word became flesh**, and tabernacled [temporarily dwelt] among us (and we ourselves beheld His glory, *the* glory as of *the* only **begotten with *the* Father**), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-4, 14).

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus Christ was with God and was God before He became flesh. The words of John leave no doubt whatsoever that Jesus Christ existed from the beginning. Jesus was the Elohim of the Old Testament Who became God manifested in the flesh. He was sent to earth by the Father, the other Elohim of the Old Testament.

The Scriptures reveal that the God Who appeared to the patriarchs and Who led the children of Israel out of Egypt was the one who became Jesus Christ (Ex. 3:6-8, I Cor. 10:4). The God Who became the Father never revealed Himself to man in Old Testament times. God the Father was not revealed until the coming of Jesus Christ: "**No one has seen God at any time**; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

A major purpose of the ministry of Jesus Christ was to reveal the Father: "...No one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know

the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son personally chooses to reveal *Him*" (Matt. 11:27).

Before New Testament times, not even the Jews knew the Father: "Yet you have not known Him [God the Father]; but I know Him. And if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar, like you. But I know Him, and I keep His Word" (John 8:55).

These plain Scriptural statements show that the God Who manifested Himself to men and women in Old Testament times was not God the Father. John adds to the evidence by recording these words of Jesus: "And the Father Himself, Who sent Me, has borne witness of Me. **You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time**" (John 5:37).

The God of the Old Testament Who walked and talked with Adam and Eve was not the Father. The God Who delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses was not the Father. The God Who appeared to the prophets in visions was not the Father. No man has ever seen the Father, except Jesus Christ: "And no one has ascended into heaven, except He Who came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man, Who is in heaven [John recorded these words in 90 AD]" (John 3:13).

The Scriptures make it absolutely clear that the Lord God Who appeared to the patriarchs and the prophets of old was Jesus Christ—not the Father. The words of Jesus Himself reveal that He pre-existed as God before He became human. In His prayer to the Father after His last Passover, Jesus said: "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, **glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You BEFORE THE WORLD EXISTED**" (John 17:4-5).

It is vital to understand that the Lord God of the Old Testament was made flesh and became Jesus Christ, the Son of God. To become God manifested in the flesh, He emptied Himself of His power and glory. As Jehovah Elohim, He had formed man from the dust of the ground. As Jesus Christ, He sacrificed Himself to redeem mankind from sin and the penalty of eternal death. This sacrifice was essential to the fulfillment of God's purpose for man.

God's Plan for Mankind

When God created mankind, He said, " '**Let Us** [God the Father and God the Son are the "Us" (John 17:21)] make man **in Our image**, **after Our likeness**; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth'....And God created man **in His *own* image, in the image of God** He created him. He created them male and female" (Gen. 1:26-27).

This Scriptural passage makes it clear that both men and women have been made in the image and likeness of God. In addition to His image and likeness, God has given mankind other attributes which are like His.

David was inspired to write, "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth....When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him,...**You have made him a little lower than God** [Hebrew *elohim*]..." (Psa. 8:1-5).

Many translations of the Bible, including the *King James Version*, render this verse as "a little lower than the angels." However, the Hebrew word *elohim*, which is used in this verse, refers to deities—not to angels. This word is used countless times in the Hebrew text in reference to the true God and to false gods. In every other occurrence in the *King James Version*, *elohim* is correctly translated "God" or "gods." In Psalm 8:5, this Hebrew word is clearly referring to the true God and should be translated accordingly. Green's translation conveys the meaning of the text: "For You have made him lack a little from God..." (*The Interlinear Hebrew-Greek-English Bible*).

The correct translation of this verse reveals the tremendous potential of mankind! God made man in His image and likeness but of an inferior nature. Although made of flesh, which is subject to sin and corruption, man has the potential to receive the Holy Spirit of God and become holy and righteous, as God is. All who attain to the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ will be born into the family of God as immortal spirit beings, composed of the same substance as God. That is God's awesome purpose for mankind!

Of all the creatures that God made to dwell on the earth, only man has been given the attributes of God—including the ability to think and reason, to speak, to write, to plan, to create, to build, to teach, to learn, to judge, to rule. God gave human beings the capacity to love, to hate, to laugh, to cry, to forgive, to repent, and to experience every type of emotion. All these qualities are godlike characteristics which man is privileged to possess although inferior to God. Man is able to experience these godlike attributes because he was given a unique spiritual dimension that God did not give to the rest of His earthly creation. Every human being has been given this quality, which makes each one "a little lower than God." The Bible describes this spiritual quality as the "spirit of man."

The Spirit of Man

The spirit that dwells in man is not another spirit being, such as an angel or demon. Rather, it is a spirit essence that imparts the power of thought, intellect and other godlike characteristics, and which makes man unique from all other creatures that God has created. This spirit essence comes from God: "Thus says LORD God, *He* who created the heavens and stretched them out, spreading forth the earth and its offspring; He Who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit [Hebrew *ruach*] to those who walk in it" (Isa. 42:5). God is actively forming this spirit essence within human beings: "Thus declares the LORD who stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit [Hebrew *ruach*] **of man within him**" (Zech. 12:1).

The spirit of man is different from what the Bible calls the "soul." The word "soul" is translated from the Hebrew *nephesh*, which refers to physical life, whether human or animal. In many occurrences, *nephesh* is translated "creature" or "life" (Gen. 1:20-21, 24, 30; 2:19; 9:4-5, 10, 12, 15-16). When translated "soul," it refers to the physical life and strength of a human being (Gen. 2:7, Ex. 1:5, Lev. 23:27, Deut. 4:29, Josh. 11:11, Ezek. 13:18-19; 18:4, 20). Unlike the soul, which ends with the death of the body, the spirit in man returns to God when a human dies (Eccl. 12:7). The spirit of man is the unique power that gives each person thought and consciousness: "But ***there is*** a **spirit in man** and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding" (Job 32:8). The apostle Paul wrote, "For who among men understands the things of men except *by* **the spirit of man** which *is* **in him**?" (I Cor. 2:11.)

It is the spirit in man which gives him the potential to become a son of God. The Scriptures show that the spirit of man was made to receive and unite with the Holy Spirit of God as a begettal from God the Father: "Everyone who has been begotten by God does not practice sin because His [God the Father's] seed *of begettal* is dwelling within him, and he is not able to *practice* sin because he has been begotten by God" (I John 3:9). This spiritual begettal takes place only after a person has repented and been baptized, and has had the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit unites with the individual's spirit, he or she is spiritually begotten as a child of God: "...You have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16). At the resurrection, every spiritually begotten child of God who has grown to spiritual maturity, having been led by the Holy Spirit to develop the mind and character of God, will be born into the family of God as an immortal spirit being (II Pet. 1:4-11). The resurrection is truly the "new birth," when the flesh is transformed to spirit and spiritually begotten Christians are **born again** as the immortal sons and daughters of God.

Because all human beings possess the spirit of man, every individual on earth can receive the Holy Spirit of begettal from God the Father. This is the glorious potential of every human being! In Psalm 8, David expresses his awe at God's purpose in creating man. David's description of man's creation reveals that his ultimate destiny is to exercise dominion over the entire physical universe: "...And have crowned him with glory and honor. **You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet;** all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the birds of heaven, the fish of the sea, and all that pass through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!" (Psa. 8:5-9.) The New Testament shows that this dominion will be granted to all who become the glorified children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:6-10).

To prepare man for his ultimate destiny, God gave him rulership over the earth: "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' " (Gen. 1:28). After finishing the creation of the

world and of Adam and Eve, "...God saw every thing that He had made, and, indeed, *it was exceedingly* good" (verse 31).

Everything that God created on the earth was given to man to be used for his benefit. What a tremendous blessing God gave to mankind—the entire world over which to have dominion!

A Choice Between Two Ways of Life

The creation of Adam and Eve is described in detail in Genesis 2. As the account shows, Adam was the first to receive life: "Then the LORD God [Jehovah Elohim] formed man *of the* dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). God created within Adam's mind a fully functioning language and the capacity to choose (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam's wife, Eve, was created from one of his ribs (verses 18, 21-23). Eve, like Adam, was created with a fully functioning language and the capacity to choose. This capacity is manifested in the account of the two trees that God placed in the Garden of Eden: "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life also was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of *the* knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:8-9).

God instructed the man and set before him choices. The command that God gave him includes a warning of the consequences for making the wrong choice: "And the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but you shall not eat of **the tree of *the* knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it in dying you shall surely die** [be subject to the penalty of death]' " (Gen. 2:15-17).

God created man as a free moral agent and gave him the power of independent choice. Every human being has been given this capacity to choose. The choice that each must make is whether or not to love and obey God. As Creator and Lawgiver, God has decreed that the penalty for disobedience to His commands is death. But through faith, love and obedience, God grants the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). This is the choice that God set before Adam and Eve, as portrayed in the description of the two trees—the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Both Adam and Eve were created in a state of innocence. They were sinless and blameless before God. But although they were not subject to the penalty of death, they did not have eternal life because they were made of the dust of the earth. They could have inherited eternal life by choosing to obey the commands of God and to eat of the tree of life, but instead they chose to disobey God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As we will see, their choice has affected all mankind. What a different world it would have been, if Adam and Eve had chosen to obey God and had eaten of the tree of life instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil!

Chapter Twenty-Six

Man Chooses the Way of Sin

After God had created them, Adam and Eve walked with God and talked with Him. Since their minds were innocent, they were not ashamed of being naked in God's presence: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25).

The book of Genesis records that Adam and Eve received God's instructions before the serpent, Satan the devil, was allowed to test them as to which way they would choose—the way that leads to eternal life, or the way that leads to sin and death (Gen. 2:16-17). Since they had been in personal contact with God, their knowledge of God's commands was direct and first-hand.

Notice the account in Genesis 3: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any creature of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, '*Is it* true that God has said, "You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" ' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may freely eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the middle of the garden, God has *indeed* said, "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die" ' " (Gen. 3:1-3).

As the Scriptural record reveals, Eve had full knowledge of God's instructions and commands concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Eve listened to the serpent: "And the serpent said to the woman, 'In dying, you shall not surely die! For God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, deciding good and evil' " (verses 4-5).

Instead of rejecting the persuasions of the serpent and obeying God, Eve took some of the fruit and ate it, and gave some to her husband Adam: "And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it was pleasing to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (verse 6).

The account of the temptation of Adam and Eve shows that their eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a knowledgeable sin. It was not due to ignorance or misunderstanding. When they ate the fruit of the tree, they knew that they were transgressing and violating God's command. But they knowingly chose to disobey God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Consequences of Adam and Eve's Sin

As a result of their sin and disobedience to God, they were no longer innocent but became sinful: "**And the eyes of both of them were opened [to know good and evil], and they knew that they *were* naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (verse 7).

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin entered into the world. With their first act of disobedi-

ence, sin became part of their very minds and beings. They had experienced evil. Because they now had a sinful nature—a mixture of good and evil—they were ashamed that they were naked and were afraid of God. Before they sinned, Adam and Eve were not afraid of God. They walked and talked with God and were not ashamed of being naked in His presence. But after they sinned, their thoughts became a mixture of good and evil and they were ashamed that they were naked: "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Then Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where *are* you?' And he said, 'I heard You *walking* in the garden, and I was afraid because I *am* naked, and *so* I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (verses 8-11.)

The sin of Adam and Eve had profound consequences for them and for all humanity. God's judgment was upon them, upon the earth and upon all mankind. Notice God's judgment upon Adam and Eve: "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception—in sorrow shall you bring forth children. Your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam He said, 'Because you have hearkened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree—of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat *of* it!"—the ground *is* cursed for your sake. In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life. It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and *thus* you shall eat the herbs of the field; in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken: **for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return**" (verses 16-19).

God's judgment included the sentence of death. Just as sin became part of their nature, the sentence of death became part of their beings. However, the sentence of death was not imposed immediately. Adam and Eve lived many hundreds of years after their sin. The book of Genesis does not tell how long Eve lived but records the length of Adam's life: "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years. And he died" (Gen. 5:5).

As a result of their sin, they were exiled from the Garden of Eden, cutting them off from the tree of life and from access to the Holy Spirit of God, which imparts the power to live forever (Gen. 3:24). Moreover, their sinful nature and the sentence of death passed to all their descendants, who were also cut off from access to the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit of God, mankind was powerless to resist the temptations of the flesh and the influence of Satan the devil, and could not be freed from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). No human being can escape the death that Adam brought upon all mankind: "for in Adam all die" (I Cor. 15:22). Again it is written: "...it is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27).

The apostle Paul confirms that the sentence of death came to all mankind as a result of the first human sin: "Therefore, as by one man

[Adam] sin entered into the world, and by means of the sin *came* death; and in this way, death passed into all mankind, *and it is* for this reason that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). The only escape from subjection to sin and death is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through which sinful human beings can be reconciled to God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When God pronounced His judgment on Adam and Eve, He gave the first prophecy of the coming Messiah, Who would redeem humanity from the curse of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:15). Until Jesus Christ came to the earth to reconcile man to God, the Holy Spirit was not available to mankind as a whole, but only to a few selected persons, including the patriarchs.

The Nature of Mankind

Like Adam and Eve, all human beings have a nature that causes them to sin by yielding to the wrong desires. These desires originate in the mind and are an integral part of human nature. The apostle Paul shows that the mind of man is motivated by "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The law of sin and death is within every human being and generates the evil desires that the Bible refers to as "fleshly lusts" or "the lust of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3, I Pet. 2:1, II Pet. 2:18). It is these fleshly lusts that lead human beings to commit sin (Jas. 1:14-15).

The fleshly nature of sin within man is further described in Romans 8:7-8: "Because **the carnal mind** [mind of the flesh] ***is* enmity against God**, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God."

All human beings are born with this nature of sin and death, which opposes the laws of God. This carnal nature is the source of every evil thought and deed: "For from within, out of the hearts of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, guile, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). Every human being is by nature an enemy of God because of these wicked works, which originate in the mind (Col. 1:21).

The apostle Paul shows that the sinful nature of the flesh has alienated all human beings from God: "For we have already charged both **Jews and Gentiles—ALL—*with* being under sin**, exactly as it *is* written: 'For there is not a righteous one—not even one! There is not one who understands; there is not one who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; together they have *all* become depraved. There is not *even* one who is practicing kindness. No, there is not so much as one! Their throats *are* like an open grave; with their tongues they have used deceit; *the* venom of asps *is* under their lips, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness; their feet *are* swift to shed blood; destruction and misery *are* in their ways; and *the* way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.' Now then, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:9-19).

Although the entire world has been shut up under sin, Paul shows that there is hope for mankind: "But the Scriptures have shut up all things under sin, so that by *the* faith of Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe" (Gal. 3:22). No one who is practicing evil can be in right standing with God, but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, those who repent of their evil works can be reconciled to God and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Every believer who is begotten by the Holy Spirit receives power to overcome "the law of sin and death" and to resist the fleshly lusts of the carnal mind.

At conversion, every repentant believer begins a lifelong battle to overcome his or her sinful nature through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul describes this fierce inner struggle against the nature that is inherent to human flesh: "So then, I am no longer working it out myself; rather, it is **sin *that is* dwelling within me**; because I fully understand that there is not dwelling within me—that is, within my fleshly being—*any* good. For the desire to do good is present within me; but how to work out that which is good, I do not find. For the good that I desire to do, I am not doing; but the evil that I do not desire to do, this I am doing. But if I do what I do not desire to do, I am no longer working it out myself, **but sin *that is* dwelling within me**" (Rom. 7:17-20).

Although Paul desired to do the will of God, he was experiencing conflict within himself because his flesh was constantly tempting him to sin. Despite his earnest desire to obey God, he found himself being drawn into sin by the powerful pulls of the flesh, which made him captive to "the law of sin" within his body: "Consequently, I find **this law *in my members***, that when I desire to do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man; but I see **another law within my own members**, warring against the law of my mind, and leading me captive to **the law of sin** that is within my own members. O *what a* wretched man I am! Who shall save me from the body of this death? I thank God *for His salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this, on the one hand, I myself serve the law of God with *my* mind; on the other hand, with the flesh, *I serve* **the law of sin**" (verses 21-25).

Paul clearly defines the inherent evil nature of human beings as "the law of sin...within my own members." In Romans 8:2, he further defines it as **"the law of sin and death." This law of sin and death is in every human being! This is the sinful human nature that we all receive from Adam and Eve by heredity.**

When they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve's nature became sinful—their eyes were opened to know good and evil. When God pronounced His judgment upon Adam and Eve for their sin, the sentence of death became part of their beings. From that time, the law of sin and death became part of the nature of mankind. As a result, mankind's way has been the way of sin and death: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof *is* the way of death" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). "The wages of sin *is* death..." (Rom. 6:23).

All mankind has chosen the way of sin and death under the influence of Satan the devil. The nature of sin and death makes all human beings subject to the deceptions of Satan, who is the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4, Rev. 12:9). Together with his fallen angels, he is the ruler over the spiritual darkness and wickedness of this world (Eph. 6:11-12). Satan's evil influence works with human nature to lead all people in the way of disobedience to God—the way of sin and death. The far-reaching effect of Satan's influence is described in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians: "Now you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you walked in times past according to the course [society and times] of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan the devil], the spirit that is now working within the **children of disobedience; among whom also we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh**, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind, and were [before God's calling] by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest *of the world*" (Eph. 2:1-3).

What a dilemma! All human beings have this sinful nature of death, cutting them off from God and making them subject to Satan's rule and society. God has subjected the entire world to this sentence of sin and death! But in so doing, God also promised a way out. There is hope! God will deliver the world from the "bondage of corruption" through Jesus Christ, according to His plan and purpose (Rom. 8:19-22).

It was God Who placed the law of sin and death within human beings, and He alone can save each person. This is why the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was planned from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). God's purpose in giving man the nature of sin and death was to ultimately redeem mankind from subjection to sin and Satan. God has provided the way of salvation for all mankind through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. Redemption from sin and death is offered only through Jesus Christ: "And there is no [Greek *ouk*, the impossibility of] salvation in any other, for neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men, by which we must [Greek *dei*, mandatory, obligatory] be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Why is it obligatory for every individual to be saved through Jesus Christ? How could His one death atone for the sins of multiple millions of human beings and redeem every one of them from the sentence of death? The answer is found in the New Testament, which explains the significance of the body and flesh of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ Was God in the Flesh

The Lord God, Who had created man from the dust of the ground, came to earth in the flesh of Jesus Christ: "And undeniably, great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifested in *the* flesh**..." (I Tim. 3:16). Why did the Lord God of the Old Testament, Jehovah Elohim, become flesh? What kind of flesh did God take upon Himself when He became Jesus Christ? Was His flesh the same as ours, or was He composed of spirit that only appeared to be flesh? The apostle Paul reveals the answer: "Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus, Who, although He existed [Greek *huparchoon*, to exist or pre-exist] **in *the* form of God**, did not consider it robbery to

be equal with God, **but emptied Himself** [of His power and glory], *and* was made in *the* **likeness** [Greek *homoioma*, the same existence] **of men**, *and* took the form of a servant [Greek *doulos*, a slave]; and being found in *the* manner of man, **He humbled Himself**, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

These inspired words of Paul confirm that before Jesus Christ became human He was, in fact, Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God of the Old Testament. Existing as God, He was composed of ever-living Spirit. As a spirit being it was impossible for Him to die. However, to redeem man from the law of sin and death, it was necessary for God to die. The only way for God to die was to become human—to be "manifested in the flesh." The God Who had created man in His image and likeness took on the same substance as man.

Paul's words to the Philippians reveal exactly how God did this. The one of Elohim Who became Jesus Christ "emptied Himself" in order to be made in the likeness of man. In emptying Himself of His glory as God, He placed Himself under the power of God the Father, who reduced Him to only a pinpoint of life. By the power of the Holy Spirit of God the Father, He was impregnated into a human ovum within the virgin Mary's womb.

When the virgin Mary asked the angel Gabriel how it was possible for her to conceive, not having known a man, he answered, "*The* Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and *the* power of *the* Highest shall overshadow you; and for this reason, the Holy One being begotten [Greek *gennoomenon*, a present tense, passive participle, meaning that the impregnation was taking place at that very moment] in you shall be called *the* Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

At the instant Jesus was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, He became the divinely begotten Son of God, fulfilling the prophecy in Psalm 2: "**I will declare the decree** of the LORD [the Elohim who became the Father]. He has said to me, '**You are My Son; this day I have begotten You**" (verse 7).

The fact that His begettal was foretold in "the decree" indicates that there was a written agreement, or covenant, between the Elohim Who became God the Father and the Elohim Who became the Son. This is also indicated in another prophecy of Jesus' coming in the flesh: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened; burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. Then I said [the Son], 'Lo, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me; I delight to do Your will, O My God; and Your law is within My heart" (Psa. 40:6-8). In his epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul quotes these words in Psalm 40: "For this reason, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but **You have prepared a body for Me** [Christ's human body of flesh]. You did not delight in burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin. Then I said, "**Lo, I come (*as* it is written of Me in *the* scroll of *the* book) to do Your will, O God**' " (Heb. 10:5-7).

The word "volume" in Psalm 40 is more accurately translated "scroll," as in Hebrews 10. The words that the psalmist quotes from the scroll are not found in any book of the Old Testament. These words, which were spoken by

the Father and the Son, would have remained hidden to the world had they not been revealed to the psalmist through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The decree that is quoted in Psalm 2:7 and the prophecy that is quoted in Psalm 40:7 were apparently recorded in a special book known only to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Since They always accomplish Their will through covenants, this book is evidently a special covenant book that the Father has at His throne. While Jesus did not speak of a covenant between Him and the Father, Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be given as "a covenant for the people" (Isa. 42:6, 49:8). In addition, Jesus revealed that He had authority from God the Father to lay down His life and to receive it back again. Notice: "On account of this, the Father loves Me; because I lay down My life, that I may receive it back again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. **I have authority to lay it down and authority to receive it back again. This commandment I received from My Father**" (John 10:17-18).

God the Father and Jesus Christ had no need of a written agreement between Themselves because Their word is true and They will fulfill it. But for the sake of the future sons and daughters of God, their plan for mankind was apparently written down in a covenant book called "the volume [scroll] of the book" (Psa. 40:7). When the apostle Paul quoted the words of the scroll that are found in Psalm 40, he was inspired to add the phrase from the Greek Septuagint, "You have prepared a body for Me." Although these words are not part of the Hebrew psalm, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to include them. Perhaps these words are also found in the scroll of the book that is spoken of in Psalm 40.

As Paul shows, Jesus gave His body as the one perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:10). Jesus said of Himself: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and **the bread that I will give is even My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world**" (John 6:51). In order to give His flesh for the life of the world, Jesus Christ had to be fully human, sharing the same mortal existence that every human being experiences.

Jesus Christ Shared the Human Experience

In writing to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul used many passages in the Old Testament to show that Jesus Christ shared the mortal existence of all human beings. Paul's inspired explanation of Psalm 8 makes this fact very clear. In translating this Hebrew psalm into the Greek language, Paul used the middle voice, which expresses a personal involvement by God: "You **Yourself** are mindful" and "You **Yourself** visit him." These expressions convey God's personal and special love for mankind. God was not remote and far away from man. He was directly and personally involved. He came to earth in the flesh as Jesus Christ, sharing the full range of human existence and experience, from conception and birth to adulthood and death.

As Paul shows, the suffering and death of Jesus Christ were essential to the fulfillment of God's purpose for man: "But in a certain place one fully testified, saying, 'What is man, that You [**Yourself**] are mindful of him, or *the*

son of man, that You [**Yourself**] visit him? You did make him a little lower than *the* angels; You did crown him with glory and honor, and You did set him over the works of Your hands; You did put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing *that was* not subjected to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

"But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering the death, in order that **by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste [partake of] death for everyone**; because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:6-10).

What a magnificent expression of God's love! The Creator of all mankind gave up His eternal existence as God and lowered Himself to the level of mortal man, so that He could suffer and die for every human being. Think of it! By the grace and love of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, He willingly took upon Himself the death penalty that had come upon all mankind through sin.

Some claim that Jesus Christ was not a mortal human being but possessed an angelic or spirit body that gave the appearance of being flesh and blood. The apostle Paul clearly contradicts this teaching: "Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, **in like manner He also took part in the same** [flesh and blood], in order that through [His] death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil.

"And *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death. For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham. **For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren** in everything [sharing the same flesh and nature] that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted *in like manner*, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:14-18).

An examination of this passage in the Greek text makes it emphatically clear that Jesus Christ was made of human flesh. In Verse 14, Paul proclaims that Jesus partook of flesh and blood "in like manner" as the children of Abraham. The phrase "in like manner" is translated from the Greek word *parapleesioos*, which means "in exactly the same way." Its meaning is very specific, as this definition by a leading authority shows: "similarly, likewise; the word does not show clearly just how far the similarity goes. But it is used in situations **where no differentiation is intended, in the sense in just the same way**" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Paul's use of the Greek word *parapleesioos* confirms that the body of Jesus Christ was composed of the same substance as all other human bodies. It is important to understand this truth. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was fully human, sharing the same flesh that all

human beings have. The fact that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh qualified Him, and Him alone, to be our Savior.

Paul goes on to show that the fulfillment of God's purpose for man made it mandatory for Jesus to be fully human. The verb "was obligated" is translated from the Greek verb *opheiloo*, which is defined as, "owe, be indebted, be obligated, one must, one ought" (Ibid.). When God entered into covenant with Abraham by taking a maledictory oath, He obligated Himself to die to fulfill the promises of the covenant. In other words, He obligated Himself to become flesh and blood. This is what He had prophesied, and this is what He did. He partook of flesh and blood because He was under obligation to take on a mortal body that was subject to death. But the promises could not be fulfilled by His death alone. In order to fulfill the promise of spiritual seed by redeeming mankind from sin, He was also obligated to become man's Mediator with God the Father. For this reason, He took on the same nature that all human beings share. Because He experienced the same temptations, He is able to make intercession for the sins of the repentant and give them strength to overcome the pulls of human nature.

Paul leaves no room to doubt that Jesus was fully human. In Hebrews 2:17, he states that Jesus was obligated "to be made like *His* brethren." The phrase "to be made like" is translated from the Greek verb *homoiooo*, which is defined as follows: "to make like, make someone like a person or a thing, become like, be like" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). Paul's use of this Greek expression makes it clear that Jesus was made like every other human being. He shared the same flesh and blood and the same human nature, which could be tempted to sin.

Many arguments have been presented by theologians, philosophers, and scholars who are convinced that Jesus was not made of human flesh. But the apostles clearly taught that Jesus was fully human. As the apostle John shows, this truth is essential to the Christian faith. In fact, it is a test by which Christians can discern a false minister from a true minister of God. Anyone who does not believe and profess that Jesus came in a fleshly body is antichrist! Those who teach that Jesus did not come in the flesh are false prophets, inspired by the spirit of antichrist and not by the Spirit of God. John warns Christians not to be deceived by their false words:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this *test* you *can* know the Spirit of God: **every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in *the* flesh is from God**.

"**And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God**. And this is THE *SPIRIT* OF ANTICHRIST, which you heard *was* to come, and even now it is already in the world....By this *means* we know the Spirit of the truth and the spirit of the deception" (I John 4:1-3, 6).

The Scriptures clearly condemn the teaching that Jesus Christ was not made of flesh. This deceptive teaching strikes at the very foundation of man's salvation. In order to offer His own body as the substitute sacrifice for man's sins, Jesus had to become a mortal human being. Since man is composed of flesh and blood, He also took part in the same. Anyone who claims otherwise is rejecting the Spirit of truth, which inspired the teachings of the apostles in the New Testament.

Jesus Took on "The Law of Sin and Death"

The apostle Paul specifically states that the flesh of Jesus was sinful: "For what *was* impossible for the law to do, in that it was weak through the flesh [because of the law of sin and death within human flesh], God, having sent His own Son **in *the* likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh**" (Rom. 8:3). A literal translation of the Greek text is "**in the likeness of flesh, of sin**...." The word "likeness" is translated from the Greek *homoioomati*, which means "likeness, the same" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Paul's statement that Jesus was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" leaves no doubt that "**the law of sin and death**" was passed on to Jesus from His mother Mary. Because Jesus had inherited "the law of sin and death," He had the potential to sin at any time during His human life. If, as some claim, Jesus was incapable of sin, it would have been impossible for Him to be tempted. The devil could not have tempted Jesus in the wilderness, as the Scriptures record (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13).

The fact that Jesus experienced this temptation by Satan shows that the law of sin and death was operating within His flesh. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, He was able to resist the desires and pulls of the flesh, through which Satan was tempting Him to sin. Jesus understood that those who succumb to the lusts of the flesh are practicing the ways of Satan. During His ministry, He openly condemned the religious leaders of the Jews for following Satan. Jesus said, "You are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to practice. He was a murderer from *the* beginning, and has not stood in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he is speaking from his own *self,* for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

At the same time, Jesus made a statement which shows that He had the potential to sin: "Yet you have not known Him [God the Father]; but I know Him. And **if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar, like you**" (John 8:55).

These words of Jesus reveal that it was possible for Him to tell a lie, if He had chosen to do so. But, unlike the religious leaders of the Jews, Jesus always chose to do the things that pleased the Father (John 8:29). He did not lie because He was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Because Jesus had the same flesh as all human beings, and the same nature as all human beings, it was entirely possible for Him to be tempted.

Since it was possible for Him to be tempted, He was also capable of sinning. And if He had sinned, He would have incurred the penalty of death. In other words, Jesus was made subject to the Law, which had the power to impose the death penalty for sin.

The apostle Paul states very plainly that Jesus was made subject to the Law: "But when the time for the fulfillment came [the time in God's plan to fulfill the prophecy of the Messiah], God sent forth His own Son, born of a woman, **born under law, in order that He might redeem those who are under law**, so that we might receive the *gift of* sonship *from God*" (Gal. 4:4-5).

The word "under" is translated from the Greek *hupo*, which means "under, under the power of, or subject to the power of" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). If Jesus had been born above the Law, then it would have been impossible for Him to sin, since the Scriptures define sin as "the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). But because He was born under the power of the Law, Jesus was subject to the penalty of death—eternal death—if He committed sin: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

In Romans 7:5-8:2, Paul describes in great detail how "the law of sin and death" works in every human being to bring death. Only through Jesus Christ, Who overcame "the law of sin and death" through the power of the Holy Spirit, can human beings be delivered from this sinful nature that leads to death: "Because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from **the law of sin and death**" (Rom. 8:2).

Jesus Christ, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, overcame every temptation to sin because He was filled with the Holy Spirit. During His forty days of temptation by Satan, Jesus chose to humble Himself by fasting rather than to nourish His flesh, so that He would rely on the Word of God and be led by the Holy Spirit of God. He did not rely on His own strength and His own mind.

There would have been no reason for Jesus to undergo such a brutal temptation if He had no potential to sin. In other words, if it were absolutely impossible for Jesus to sin, His temptation by Satan the devil would have had no purpose whatsoever. There would have been no way for Jesus even to experience temptation if there was no potential for being influenced by the pulls of sinful flesh, through which all humans are tempted to sin (Jas. 1:14-15).

In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul reveals that Jesus experienced the same temptations that beset all human beings: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but ***one Who* was tempted in all things** [in every way] **according to *the* likeness of *our own temptations*; yet *He was* without sin**. Therefore, we should come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15-16).

The phrase "**according to *the* likeness of *our own temptations***" is translated from the Greek phrase *kath omoioteeta*, which literally means "in every way just as we are." In other words, while Jesus was in the flesh, He experienced exactly the same temptations that we do because He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Yet He never sinned because He never yielded to a single temptation of the flesh or of Satan the devil.

NOWHERE DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR JESUS TO SIN. ON THE CONTRARY, THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALS THAT JESUS WAS TEMPTED TO COMMIT SIN. BUT ALTHOUGH HE WAS TEMPTED, HE DID NO SIN.

Jesus Overcame Sin in the Flesh

Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, with the law of sin and death within His members, just as it is within us, so that as our High Priest He could empathize with our weaknesses. Jesus fully understands our struggle against the pulls of the flesh, having experienced the same battle in His own human flesh. Because he has shared the same sinful nature, He can have compassion when we weaken and commit sins. He mercifully intercedes for us with the Father, obtaining His forgiveness for our sins. Through Jesus' ongoing intercession in our behalf, God the Father's mercy and grace can continually be imparted to each one of us.

The gift of grace is possible only through Jesus Christ, Who offered His own sinless body as the substitute sacrifice for our sins: "...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps **Who committed no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth...Who Himself bore** [carried] **our sins within** [Greek *en*, within] **His own body** on the tree..." (I Pet. 2:21-24).

When Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross, He paid the penalty for the sins of the whole world. Although He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and had the law of sin and death within His flesh, He never sinned. Because He was sinless, He was therefore able to offer His own life for the sins of others. As Paul wrote, "For He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] Who knew [Greek *ginooskoo*, to know by self-experience] no sin *to be* sin for us..." (II Cor. 5:21). As the Lord God of the Old Testament, Jesus had created mankind. Because His life was of greater value than the lives of all other human beings combined, His death was able to atone for the sins of the entire world.

This profound aspect of the body of Jesus Christ reveals the magnitude of God's love toward man. Jesus Christ gave up His power and immortality as one of the Elohim of the Godhead and took upon Himself the weak, sinful nature of human flesh. He willingly left His eternal glory with the Father and came to this earth to offer His body as a perfect and complete sacrifice for sin: "On account of this, the Father loves Me: because I lay down My life, that I may receive it back again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down and authority to receive it back again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John

10:17-18). In His great love for mankind, God willingly gave up His power and glory to become a man with the law of sin and death within His flesh. If He had succumbed even once to the pulls of the flesh, He would have been required to die for His own sin.

Jesus Christ risked losing His glory forever in order to save mankind from sin! By becoming a man, made of flesh and blood, and having the same nature as all human beings, He was subject to the pulls of the flesh and "the law of sin and death." Although He was tempted "in all things according to the likeness of our temptations," He never sinned. Because He was sinless, He was able to offer Himself as God the Father's perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, so that all mankind may be delivered from the sentence of death.

The apostle John understood that the death of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for the sins of the entire world: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And *yet*, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ *the* Righteous; and He is *the* propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world" (I John 2:1-2). According to God's plan, in His time, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will be applied to the entire world, redeeming all mankind from the sentence of death. What an awesome sacrifice! **The Creator of the world died to save mankind from death**.

The love of God was openly manifested to the world when God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for sinners who are the enemies of God: "For even when we were without strength, at the appointed time Christ died for *the* ungodly. For rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, although perhaps someone might have the courage even to die for a good man. **But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us**. Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, **when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His own Son**, much more *then*, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:6-10).

Jesus Gave His Body to Redeem Mankind

God Himself, Who had sentenced mankind to the death penalty, voluntarily became a human being and took upon Himself the sentence of death in man's stead. He gave up His glory and took a body of human flesh, which was subject to "the law of sin and death." Because He was capable of being tempted to sin, His eternal existence as God was at risk! **If Jesus Christ had sinned even once, He would have died for His own sins and would never have returned to His glory with the Father**.

Jesus was fully aware of the consequences of giving in to the pulls of His flesh. The apostle Paul shows how earnestly and agonizingly Jesus prayed for strength to resist the temptations of the flesh: "Who, in the days of His flesh, **offered up both prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears to Him Who was able TO SAVE HIM FROM DEATH**,

and was heard because *He* feared *God* [was reverent and submissive to God the Father]. Although He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience from the things that He suffered; and having been perfected [by overcoming the law of sin and death], He became *the* Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him" (Heb. 5:7-9).

Because Jesus had the potential to sin, He needed to be saved from death. That is why He prayed so fervently to God the Father. If there had been no possibility for Jesus to sin, there would have been no need to beseech the Father to save Him from death. Paul's description of His prayers makes it undeniably clear that Jesus Christ was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and was subject to the law of sin and death. If Jesus only appeared to be flesh but was not truly human, He could not have experienced temptation, suffering, and death.

From the beginning of the world, it was ordained that Jesus Christ would suffer and die to atone for the sins of mankind: "But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering the death, in order that **by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone**; because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to **make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings**" (Heb. 2:9-10).

As the Son of God, Jesus came in the flesh and died in order that He might give life to the world: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if anyone shall eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and **the bread that I will give is even My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world**" (John 6:51).

The law of God, which is eternal and inexorable, had condemned sinful mankind to the penalty of death. **That penalty had to be paid**. In order to redeem mankind from death, the Creator, whose life was of greater value than the lives of all mankind, paid the penalty in man's stead. **The Creator died for His creation! In so doing, He demonstrated His eternal love for mankind**. Through His sacrifice, every human being can be delivered from the sentence of sin and death, and can receive the gift of eternal life: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Each one who repents of sin and accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can be reconciled to God the Father: "For you *were* once alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works; but **now He has reconciled *you* in the body of His flesh through the death** [His death for the sins of mankind]..." (Col. 1:21-22).

Reconciliation with God the Father is granted only through the body of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice alone can atone for human sin because He alone lived a perfect, sinless life as a fleshly human being. As the Son of God, God in the flesh, He overcame the law of sin and death, which was

working within His fleshly body: "...God, having sent His own Son **in *the* likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh**" (Rom. 8:3). Jesus Christ **CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH!** By mastering the pulls of the flesh, He showed that the power of God is able to deliver mankind from the law of sin and death. Because God has provided the way of deliverance, man need not remain under bondage to his fleshly nature. That is the wonderful meaning of the body of Jesus Christ!

The apostle Paul was inspired and overwhelmed by the greatness of God's plan of salvation for man: "**O *the* depth of *the* riches of both *the* wisdom and *the* knowledge of God! How unfathomable *are* His judgments and unsearchable *are* His ways!** For who did know *the* mind of *the* Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who first gave to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For from Him, and through Him, and unto Him *are* all things; to Him *be* the glory into the ages of eternity" (Rom. 11:33-36).

Blessings Through Partaking of the Body of Christ

When we accept the body of Jesus Christ for our salvation, we receive not only forgiveness of sin but also the promise of physical healing. As our sin offering, Jesus took upon His own body both our sentence of death and our physical sufferings, that He might be both our Savior and our Healer. Jesus was wounded for our sins and transgressions, and by His stripes we are healed of our sicknesses and diseases (Isa. 53:4-12, Matt. 8:17, Jas. 5:14-16, I Pet. 2:24).

When we understand the significance of the body of Jesus Christ, we can begin to grasp the importance of obeying His command to partake of the unleavened bread of the Christian Passover: "Take, eat; this is My body, which *is* being broken for you. This do in the remembrance of Me" (I Cor. 11:24).

True Christians will be manifesting their acceptance of the body of Jesus Christ for their forgiveness and healing by partaking of the unleavened bread each year at the Christian Passover. By partaking of this symbol of His body, they will be showing that they as individuals have a part in the blessings that are offered through His sacrifice for sins (I Cor. 11:26). These blessings are offered only to those who have repented of their sins and been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).

Upon receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, each believer becomes a child of God and a member of the body of Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that every true Christian is a member of the body of Jesus Christ, which is the true Church of God, and He is the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23-30, Col. 1:18; 2:17, I Cor. 12:13-27, Rom. 12:5). This wonderful relationship of love and grace is offered by God the Father to all true believers through the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In the next chapter, we will study the significance of the blood of Jesus Christ, which is symbolized by the wine of the Christian Passover.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE MEANING OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ opened the way for the fulfilling of God's plan of salvation for all mankind. Through His death, Jesus ratified the New Covenant, which enables every sinner who repents to receive forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. The New Covenant was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ, "...the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His shed blood is symbolized by the wine that every true Christian partakes of during the Christian Passover ceremony. When Jesus instituted this ceremony, He "took the cup; and after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it; **for this is My blood, the *blood* of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for *the* remission of sins**' " (Matt. 26:27-28).

By offering His own blood, He purchased remission of sin for all time: "...Without *the* shedding of blood there is no remission....in *the* consummation of the ages, He has been manifested for *the* purpose of removing sin through His sacrifice *of Himself*" (Heb. 9:22, 26). The blood of Jesus Christ was poured out to remove the sins of all mankind. But Jesus Christ is a personal Savior, which means that His blood must be individually imputed to each one who repents of sin and believes in Him: "...This cup *is* the New Covenant in My blood, **which is poured out for you**" (Luke 22:20).

Each Christian who partakes of the small cup of wine during the Christian Passover service is symbolizing his or her acceptance of the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from the penalty of death. By partaking of the wine and the unleavened bread, each one is acknowledging his or her personal faith in the shed blood and the broken body of Jesus Christ, which alone can bring eternal life. Jesus Himself clearly said, "...**Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves**" (John 6:53).

The blood of Jesus Christ works in many powerful ways to bring eternal life to those who accept His sacrifice. This work began with the establishment of the New Covenant and will continue to the return of Jesus Christ.

The Multi-Faceted Meaning of the Blood of Jesus Christ

Let us examine the many ways in which the blood of Jesus Christ is fulfilling the promise of salvation and eternal life:

1) Jesus Christ ratified the New Covenant with His blood. At the institution of the Christian Passover, Jesus said, "This cup *is* the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20).

No covenant can be established without a blood sacrifice. When God established His covenant with Abraham, He ratified it by passing between the halves of the sacrificial animals (Gen. 15:17-18). This covenant was the foundation for both the Old Covenant with the physical seed of Abraham and the New Covenant with the spiritual seed.

When the Old Covenant was established, the people of Israel agreed to obey all the laws and statutes of God, which were written in the book of the covenant, known as "the book of the law." The covenant was then ratified with the blood of animals: "And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the ears of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words" (Ex. 24:6-8). The blood of the sacrificial animals represented the death that would be required of every person who broke the covenant.

The Old Covenant was broken countless times during the history of the people of Israel and Judah. By breaking the covenant, the people forfeited their right to the blessings of God and brought themselves under the curses of the covenant, which included the sentence of death. To redeem them from the curse of death, Jesus Christ, the Lord God of the Old Testament, sacrificed His life. Because the Old Covenant required the death of all the children of Israel, the Lord God chose to end that covenant. As the God Who had established the covenant, He had the power to end it with His death. In His great mercy and love, God Himself became flesh and died! Through His death, He terminated the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant, which offers eternal life through faith.

Like the words of the Old Covenant, the words of the New Covenant are recorded in God's Word. The books of the New Testament reveal the way to enter the New Covenant and receive the promise of eternal life. This promise was sealed WITH THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. God Himself, Who cannot lie, guaranteed the promise of salvation with His own blood. There can be no surer guarantee!

Jesus Christ, Who ratified the New Covenant with His blood, is now actively fulfilling the promise of salvation by serving as Mediator of the covenant. Every sinner can be reconciled to God the Father by coming to "...Jesus, *the* Mediator of *the* New Covenant; and to **sprinkling of *the* blood** of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of* Abel" (Heb. 12:24).

2) Jesus Christ redeems sinners and removes sins through His blood. The word "redeem" means to buy back what has been sold. All human beings have been "sold under sin" by transgressing the commandments and laws of God (Rom. 3:23; 7:14, I John 3:4). In becoming the servants of sin, all have earned the penalty of death (Rom. 6:16, 23). The only escape from this death is through Jesus Christ, Who paid the price for the redemption of every human being with His crucifixion and death: "...The Son of

man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as* a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Jesus Christ sacrificed His own life as the Passover Lamb of God (I Cor. 5:7). His one perfect sacrifice purchased redemption for sinners throughout all ages: "But Christ Himself has become High Priest of the coming good things, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by *human* hands (that is, not of this *present physical* creation [the temple in Jerusalem before its destruction]). Not by *the* blood of goats and calves, **but by the means of His own blood**, He entered once for all into the holiest [into the presence of God the Father, as the perfect and complete sin offering], **having *by* Himself secured everlasting redemption**" (Heb. 9:11-12).

Each one who is redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ receives forgiveness of sins: "...Wherein He [God the Father] has made us the objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*, in Whom we have **redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace**" (Eph. 1:6-7). When a person truly repents of his or her sins and accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God the Father counts every sin the person has committed as paid in full by the blood of His own Son. Each one who is redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ is freed from the ownership of sin and the penalty of death (Rom. 5:21; 6:1-4). He or she is no longer the property and slave of sin and Satan the devil, but has become the property and servant of Jesus Christ and God the Father (Rom. 6:18, 22).

As the servants of God, each one must forsake the way of sin: "Knowing that you were not **redeemed** by corruptible things, by silver or gold, **from your futile way of living**, inherited *by tradition* from *your* forefathers; but **by *the* precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:18-19).

Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price to redeem sinners from the power of sin and the penalty of death. Because the price of redemption was so great, those who are purchased by His blood and become the property of God the Father are obligated to serve Him with wholehearted devotion: "WHAT! Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have *within you* from God, and you are not your own? **For you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's**" (I Cor. 6:19-20).

Every believer who repents of sin and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ receives the Holy Spirit as a begettal from God the Father (Acts 2:38). Each Christian then begins a new life of service to God (Rom. 6:4, 10). The Gospel of John shows that this new life is a continuing process of growth: "But the one who practices the truth [striving to live by every word of God] comes to the light [learning from Jesus Christ, Who set the example], so that his works may be manifested, that they have been accomplished by *the power of* God" (John 3:21).

Christians who are walking in the light of God's Word by following the example of Jesus Christ will continue to receive forgiveness through His blood when they stumble and sin: "However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin**. If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (I John 1:7-9). Daily forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ is granted only to those who are walking in the light of God's Word.

3) Jesus Christ justifies and sanctifies sinners through His blood. The gift of justification before God the Father comes through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ: "...having been **justified by faith**....God commends His own love to us because when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, having been **justified now by His blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:1, 8-9). Justification means that a person has been placed in right standing with God and is counted as blameless before God the Father. This right standing with God the Father is made possible because the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed, or attributed, to the individual.

Justification through the blood of Jesus Christ is granted only to those who repent of their sins and transgressions of God's laws: "Because the hearers of the law *are* not just [justified] before God, but **the doers of the law** [the ones who are keeping the commandments of God] **shall be justified**" (Rom. 2:13).

Every believer who repents of sin and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ receives complete justification before God: "...But you were **washed** [by baptism], you were **sanctified**, you were **justified in the name of the Lord Jesus**, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11). At baptism, the believer not only receives justification, but is also sanctified before God the Father. The blood of Jesus Christ makes this sanctification possible: "For this reason, **Jesus, in order that He might sanctify the people by His own blood**, also suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12). The only way to be made holy, or sanctified, in God the Father's sight is through the blood of Jesus Christ.

To be "sanctified" means to be set aside for a holy use and purpose. The prayer of Jesus on His last Passover night shows that every true believer is being sanctified by the Word of God: "Sanctify them in Your truth; YOUR WORD IS THE TRUTH" (John 17:17). Each one who truly believes in Jesus Christ and is sanctified through His blood is set aside by God's Word and by the Holy Spirit to live his or her life God's way. That is the purpose of sanctification.

4) Jesus Christ purifies the conscience and brings peace with God through His blood. Peace with God the Father is possible only through the blood of Jesus Christ: "For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness

should dwell; and, **having made peace through the blood of His cross**..." (Col. 1:19-20). The blood of Jesus Christ brings peace with God by removing the enmity that is caused by sin: "For He is our peace,...having annulled in His flesh the enmity..." (Eph. 2:14-15).

Jesus removes this enmity by purifying the mind of each one who has repented of sin: "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and *the* ashes of a heifer sprinkled *on* those who are defiled, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh [not the purifying of the mind], to a far greater degree, the **blood of Christ**, Who through *the* eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **shall purify [purge or cleanse] your conscience from dead works [works that lead to death] to serve *the* living God**" (Heb. 9:13-14).

Those whose consciences have been purified from the works of the flesh are no longer the enemies of God because they are no longer "alienated...by wicked works" (Col. 1:21). They have forsaken the way of sin to begin a new life of righteousness, learning to do the good works that God has commanded: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). By keeping the commandments of God with a pure conscience, true Christians are manifesting the love that God desires: "Now **the purpose of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience,** and genuine faith" (I Tim. 1:5). Those who profess to serve God but are not keeping His commandments have not had their consciences purified from dead works.

5) Jesus Christ gives direct access to God the Father through His blood. The apostle Paul declares, "But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once afar off [cut off from God] **are made near by the blood of Christ**" (Eph. 2:13).

In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul reveals that those whose consciences have been purified by the blood of Jesus Christ have direct access to God the Father: "Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter into the *true* holiest [into the presence of God the Father in heaven above] **by the blood of Jesus**, by a new and living way, which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh), and *having* a great High Priest over the house of God, **let us approach *God*** with a true heart, with full conviction of faith, **our hearts having been purified [by the blood of Jesus] from a wicked conscience**, and our bodies having been washed with pure water [by baptism]. Let us hold fast without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful" (Heb. 10:19-23).

During His ministry, Jesus Himself revealed that His followers would receive direct access to God the Father: "In that day [after the resurrection of Jesus] you shall ask in My name; and I do not tell you that I will beseech the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:26-27). From the time of Jesus' ascension to heaven, every Christian has been given authority to approach the Father in His name. The only intermediary

between Christians and God the Father is Jesus Christ, Who intercedes as High Priest to remove sins with His own blood that He shed on the Passover day of His crucifixion.

True Christians have no need of a priesthood of men, nor of a temple in which to worship God. Not only do they have direct access to the throne of God the Father in heaven, but He is dwelling within them through the Holy Spirit: "...For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people....and I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,' says *the* Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:16, 18). Every Christian who has been begotten by the Holy Spirit of God the Father becomes a member of the family of God (Eph. 3:14-15). Each one is a child of God the Father and may call Him, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). This new relationship with the Father shows the love of God through Jesus Christ, Whose blood makes it possible for human beings to become the children of God: "Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God!" (I John 3:1.)

6) Jesus Christ is building the Church through His blood. The New Testament reveals that each spiritually begotten child of God is placed into His Church. The Church of God is a spiritual body, and is called the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). Every true believer is a member of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27). Each one is joined to the body of Jesus Christ at baptism. When a believer is baptized, he or she is baptized into the covenant death of Jesus Christ, being co-joined with the body of Jesus Christ into the same death. In this symbolic covenant death, the believer is united with the body of Jesus Christ, being buried with Him in the baptismal grave and then rising with Him to a new life (Rom. 6:3-4). Upon receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, each believer becomes a member of the body of Jesus Christ. This body is composed of all spiritually begotten Christians and constitutes the true Church.

The Church belongs to God the Father, Who has made Jesus Christ the Head of the Church. The apostle Paul reveals that the Church of God was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul told the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed [with the Word] the church of God, **which He purchased with His own blood**" (Acts 20:28).

Every member of the true Church of God has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. They all belong to God the Father because Jesus has redeemed them from sin with His own blood. They are no longer the property of sin and Satan—nor are they the property of any man or any organization of men. They are the property and the children of God the Father, and Jesus Christ is their Head.

7) Jesus Christ delivers Christians from Satan the devil through His blood. Each Christian who has been redeemed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ has also been freed from the power of Satan: "Giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the

saints in the light; **Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness** and has transferred *us* unto the kingdom of the Son of His love; in Whom we have **redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins**" (Col. 1:12-14).

Satan is the great evil force, the prince of the power of the air, who captivates the minds and hearts of people and draws them into sin (Eph. 2:1-2). Many people do not believe that Satan exists. Those who do usually see his influence only in the gross, obvious evils in the world around them. They fail to realize that Satan does not present himself as an evil being, but as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14). He is, in fact, the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4).

Satan is aided by a host of seducing spirits in his efforts to deceive the people of this world: "And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. And this is the *spirit* of antichrist [from Satan the devil], which you heard *was* to come, and even now it is already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because greater is He Who *is* in you [the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God the Father] than the one who *is* in the world [Satan the devil, who is the god of this world]" (I John 4:3-4).

Every Christian who has been begotten by the Holy Spirit of God has been delivered from the power of Satan, who is leading the world deeper and deeper into sin. But Satan does not give up on those who turn from the way of sin and disobedience. He uses all the wily devices of his wicked mind to lure Christians back into sin. Each Christian must continually be on guard against Satan's deceptions and must use the full power of God and all the spiritual weapons that He provides to resist the devil (Eph. 6:10-18, I Pet. 5:8-9). Christians must draw close to God daily, lest they be drawn into temptation and sin. If they do sin, they must repent and ask God the Father to cleanse them from their sin through the blood of Jesus Christ (I John 1:7-9).

Cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ is a lifelong process. It is this continued application of the blood of Jesus Christ that gives each Christian the victory over Satan and His devices: "And the great dragon was cast out, that ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, who is deceiving the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels [evil spirits, or demons] were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven say, 'Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ because the accuser of our brethren has been cast down, who accuses them day and night before our God.'

"But **they overcame him** [Satan the devil] **through the blood of the Lamb**, and through the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death" (Rev. 12:9-11).

8) Jesus Christ is perfecting Christians through His blood. As human beings, with the law of sin and death within our flesh, not one of us is perfect. But in order to enter the kingdom of God, we must all become spiritually perfect, as God is: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Nothing we do, of and by ourselves, can make us perfect before God the Father. The patriarch Job learned this lesson by experience (Job 9:20; 40:9-14; 42:1-6). No amount of human willpower and work can bring spiritual perfection. The only way to attain spiritual perfection is through the blood of Jesus Christ, which enables us to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from God the Father. the indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives us the power to become like Jesus Christ, Who Himself attained spiritual perfection by overcoming the temptations of the flesh (Heb. 5:8-9).

The very purpose for the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh was to bring human beings to perfection by reconciling them to God the Father. That is the first step toward spiritual perfection: "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross...He has reconciled *you* in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you holy and unblamable and unimpeachable before Him** [God the Father]; if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard...*even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints; to whom God did will to make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory; Whom we preach**, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus**" (Col. 1:20-23, 26-28).

The spiritual perfection of individual Christians is now being accomplished through the blood of Jesus Christ: "And *may* the God of peace, Who raised our Lord Jesus from among *the* dead—that great Shepherd of the sheep—**through *the* blood of *the* everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work in order that you may do His will; accomplishing in you that which *is* well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom *be the* glory into the ages of eternity. Amen**" (Heb. 13:20-21).

In a vision that the apostle John recorded in the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ appears as the Lamb of God, Who was slain for the sins of the world, and a new song accompanies the prayers of the saints: "Worthy are You to take the book, and to open its seals because **You were slain, and did redeem [purchase] us to God [the Father] BY YOUR OWN BLOOD, out of every tribe and language and people and nation**..." (Rev. 5:9).

This is the glorious salvation that Jesus envisioned when He said, "**For this is My blood, the *blood* of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for *the* remission of sins**" (Matt. 26:28). How profound these words are when we understand the multi-faceted work of the blood of Jesus Christ!

In the next chapter, we will learn how the Old Testament prophecies of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ were all fulfilled on the Passover day—the 14th of Nisan.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE AGONY OF THE CRUCIFIXION

At His last Passover meal with the disciples, Jesus said, "Behold, even *now* the hand of him who is betraying Me *is* with Me at the table (Luke 22:21). Although Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, He washed Judas' feet along with the other disciples' (John 13:2-5, 11). Then after receiving the sop, Judas left to betray Him. As Jesus administered the symbols of His body and His blood to the eleven disciples who were with Him, He knew that the time of His betrayal was near. When He departed with the disciples to the Mount of Olives, walking into the darkness of that dread night, Jesus began to feel the melancholy oppressiveness of the sins of the whole world weighing on Him, and His mind was filled with thoughts of the suffering and agony that lay ahead. Though His disciples were with Him, an overwhelming feeling of isolation penetrated every cell of His being. He could not share His sorrow with them because they did not understand what the rest of the Passover night and day would bring. He had spoken to them in the days leading up to the Passover, forewarning them of His betrayal and death, but they did not grasp the meaning of His words. They did not know that His life was about to end with a gruesome death on the cross as the TRUE PASSOVER SACRIFICE OF GOD—THE SIN OFFERING FOR THE WORLD.

The time had come! His rendezvous with destiny drew closer and closer to its ultimate climax! The Lord God of the Old Testament, Who had come to earth in the flesh, was about to die the agonizing death that the prophets had foretold. This was the reason He had come into the world. He came in the flesh in order to die—to give His body to be beaten and scourged, and to offer His blood for the sins of mankind. But no human being desires to die a slow death in great pain and agony. As Jesus anticipated His suffering, His flesh cried out to be spared. Only the love of God, which had sustained Him and brought Him to this day, could give Him the strength to endure the suffering that was appointed to Him.

He had manifested the love of God during His days in the flesh, setting a perfect example for His disciples. Now the love of God would be manifested by His death. As they were walking to the Mount of Olives, He charged His disciples, "LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." He spoke from the depths of His innermost being, desiring to indelibly etch His words into their minds: "If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love.

"These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and *that* your joy may be full. **This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you**. No one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do

whatever I command you....You Yourselves did not choose Me, but I have personally chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go *forth* and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; so that whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He may give you. **These things I command you, that you love one another**" (John 15:10-17).

Jesus was about to manifest the greatest love of all by laying down His life for them. But the disciples did not know this yet, nor did they know that some of them would also lose their lives for His name's sake in the days and years ahead. Jesus warned the disciples that the world would hate them and persecute them, just as the world had hated and persecuted Him: "**If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before *it hated* you**. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this. Remember the word that I spoke to you:, a servant is not greater than his master. **If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also**. If they kept My word, they will keep your *word* also. But they will do all these things to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him Who sent Me.

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have had sin; but now they have nothing to cover their sin. **The one who hates Me hates My Father also**. If I had not done among them the works that no other man has done, they would not have had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this has happened so that the saying might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without *a* cause.' But when the Comforter has come, which I will send to you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of the truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one shall bear witness of Me. Then you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from *the* beginning. I have spoken these things to you so that you will not be offended" (John 15:18-16:1).

Jesus continued to warn them, telling them in plain and unmistakable words that they, too, would be killed for preaching the truth of God: "They shall cast you out of the synagogues; furthermore, **the time is coming that everyone who kills you will think that he is rendering service to God**. And they shall do these thing to you because they do not know the Father, nor Me. **But I have told you these things so that when the time comes, you may remember** that I said *them* to you. However, I did not say these things to you at *the* beginning because I was with you....These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world**" (John 16:2-4; 33).

When they arrived at the Mount of Olives, Jesus told His disciples, "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me" (Matt. 26:38). Then, taking Peter, James and John, He went into the Garden of Gethsemane: "And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, 'Pray *that you* do not enter into temptation.' And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and falling to *His* knees, He prayed, saying, 'Father,

if You are willing to take away this cup from Me—; NEVERTHELESS, NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR *WILL* BE DONE' " (Luke 22:40-42).

Jesus Knew that He Could Not Escape Death

Even as He prayed to the Father, Jesus knew that the prophecies of His suffering and death must be fulfilled. As Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God of the Old Testament, He had given the first prophecy of His suffering to Adam and Eve in the presence of Satan, who would instigate His death: "And I will put enmity [hatred] between you [the serpent—Satan the devil] and the woman, and between your seed [the children of the wicked one—Matt. 13:38] and her Seed [Jesus Christ]; He [her seed, Christ] will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His [Jesus Christ's] heel [a prophecy of His own crucifixion]" (Gen. 3:15).

Jesus knew that He was the Lamb of God "slain from *the* foundation of *the* world" (Rev. 13:8). He knew from the beginning that He was appointed to die on the Passover day—Nisan 14, 30 AD. As the Lord God of the Old Testament, He had entered into covenant with Abraham by passing between the parts of the sacrificial animals to represent His own death (Gen. 15:5-18). At the beginning of the 14th, during the dark hours of the night, He had delivered the promises of the covenant, foreshadowing the time when, as Jesus Christ, He would deliver the promises of the New Covenant. On the day portion of the 14th, the animals for the covenant sacrifice were slaughtered and their bodies were split asunder, allowing their blood to spill on the ground. During those same hours, the body of Jesus Christ would be beaten and broken open, and His blood would be poured out unto death. In the late afternoon of the 14th, the slaughtered animals lay still on the ground, and Abraham watched and waited. In like manner, Jesus' body would remain on the cross as the end of the 14th drew near, while his followers watched and waited (Luke 23:49). Although Jesus died at the "ninth hour," or approximately 3 PM, His body was not placed in the tomb until the 14th was ending at sunset.

At the exact time that Jesus would be buried, Abraham experienced a foretype of His burial: "And it came to pass, as the sun was going down, that **a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And, behold, a horror of great darkness fell upon him** [symbolic of Jesus' burial, which would seal the everlasting covenant with Abraham and the spiritual seed]" (Gen. 15:12). Abraham remained in this symbolic burial after the sun had gone down. When the darkness of night had come, the Lord God passed between the parts of the sacrifice: "And it came to pass—when the sun went down and it was dark—behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces" (verse 17), wholly consuming those sacrificial animals.

By this maledictory oath, God Himself confirmed that He would fulfill the covenant through His own death and burial. This event, which took place during the "horror of great darkness," also has a fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The only sign that Jesus gave of His Messiahship was the length of time that He would be "in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). As He lay in

the darkness of the tomb for three days and three nights, He was confirming that He was the Messiah Who would fulfill the promises of the New Covenant.

Jesus Knew That the Words of the Prophets Would All Be Fulfilled

As the covenant sacrifice had foreshadowed and the prophets had foretold, the suffering and death that were appointed to Jesus would surely come to pass. Every detail would be fulfilled, exactly as recorded in Scripture. When Judas left His presence on that Passover night, Jesus knew that Judas was on his way to the authorities to betray Him, as it was written: "Even a man, my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psa. 41:9). Jesus also knew that the elders and the chief priests would pay Judas thirty pieces of silver to betray Him: "And I said to them, 'If *it is* good, give me my price; and if not, let it go.' So **they weighed my price—thirty *pieces* of silver**" (Zech. 11:12). Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a dead slave (Ex. 21:32).

Jesus also remembered the prophecy of Isaiah that He would be led as a lamb to the slaughter: "***He is* despised and rejected of men**; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: yet we esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"**But He *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* crushed for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed**. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned each one to his own way; and **the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth**....He was cut off out of the land of the living; **for the transgression of My people He *was* stricken**....Yet the LORD willed to crush Him and He has put Him to grief: You shall **make His life an offering for sin,....He shall see of the travail of His soul.** He shall be fully satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; **and He shall bear their iniquities**....because H**e has poured out His soul to death;** and He was counted among the transgressors; and H**e bore the sin of many, and made intercession for transgressors**" (Isa. 53:3-12).

Jesus was fully aware that He would be mocked, beaten and spit upon, and would suffer a terrible scourging. The whip that would inflict His scourging would have tips of nails and glass, and would literally rip the flesh from off His body. After forty lashes, He would be near death. He knew that this torturous ordeal would leave Him so horribly disfigured that He would be almost unrecognizable. Isaiah prophesied all of these things: "**I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair;** I hid not My face from shame and spitting....Many were astonished at Him—**for *His body was* so disfigured—even His form beyond that of the sons of men**" (Isa. 50:6; 52:14).

Jesus knew that the prophecy of David in Psalm 22 was about to be fulfilled. He would cry out these very words while He was hanging on the cross: "**My God, my God, why have You forsaken me,** and *why are You so* far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not answer; and in the night season, and am not silent....But I am a worm, and no man; **a reproach of men, and despised by the people**. All who see Me mock Me; they shoot out the lip; they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted on the LORD; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, seeing He delights in Him" (Psa. 22:1-2, 6-8).

Even during the mocking and jeering of the people, priests and Pharisees, He would trust God the Father, as He had from His earliest days in the flesh: "For You are He who took Me out of the womb, causing Me to trust while on My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth; You are My God from My mother's womb. Be not far from Me; for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bulls [the demons] have encircled around Me; strong bulls of Bashan [Satan and his chief demons] have surrounded Me. They opened wide their mouths at Me, like a ravening and a roaring lion" (verses 9-13).

The next prophecies of David reveal the excruciating agony that He would suffer during His crucifixion as His physical life drained away: "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint [from the jolt of the cross falling into its hole]; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels [from loss of blood]. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws;

"Dogs [the soldiers] have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers [the priests and Pharisees] have encircled Me: **they have pierced My hands and My feet** [nailing Him to the cross]; and You have brought Me into the dust of death. **I can count all My bones** [because the flesh had been ripped open]; they look and gloat over Me [in astonishment because He was so disfigured]. **They divided My garments among them and cast lots upon My vesture**" (verses 14-18).

In the midst of this agonizing ordeal, Jesus would pray to God the Father for strength to endure: "But You, O LORD, be not far from Me; **O My strength, hasten to help Me!** Deliver My soul from the sword, My precious *life* from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth….**You have answered Me**....For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted [Jesus Christ]; and **He has not hidden His face from him, but when he cried to Him, He heard**" (verses 19-24). These prophetic words of David show that God the Father would not forsake His Son at any time during His suffering and crucifixion, but would be with Him as He bore the sins of all mankind.

In Psalm 69, God inspired David to write more of the thoughts that Jesus would have while on the cross. Although He had done no wrong, He would be hated and condemned to die by crucifixion, which was the lot of criminals. His death would bring great disrepute upon His disciples, and He

would be rejected by His own physical brothers and sisters: "**Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head;** those who would cut me off are mighty being wrongfully my enemies....Do not let those who wait on You, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed because of me; **let not the ones who seek You** [His disciples] **be ashamed because of me**, O God of Israel because **for Your sake I have borne reproach, shame has covered my face**. I have become a stranger to My brothers and an alien to My mother's children" (Psa. 69:4-8).

Jesus would suffer all the shame and agony of the crucifixion because of His profound love and zeal for God the Father: "**For the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up, and the reproaches of those who reproached You have fallen upon Me**....Answer me, O LORD, for Your steadfast love is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; answer me speedily. Draw near unto my soul and redeem it; deliver me because of my enemies. **You have known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor** [being executed like a criminal]; my enemies are all before You. **Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none**. They also gave Me gall for My food; and **in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink**" (verses 9, 16-21).

Jesus knew that He would have to bear this shameful and agonizing ordeal to the end. He knew that His suffering would become so unbearable that He would feel as if the Father had abandoned Him, and would cry out, "**My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?**" He knew that a spear would be thrust into His body, as the prophet Zechariah was inspired to write: "And **they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced** [with a spear], and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as the bitterness over the firstborn" (Zech. 12:10).

Knowing that every one of these prophecies must be fulfilled, Jesus was in great anguish as He prayed to the Father. The thought of suffering such a hideous and merciless death was more than He could bear. Luke records, "Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. **And being in AGONY** [in His mind and spirit, knowing that all eternity hinged on this day], **He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground**" (Luke 22:43-44).

Jesus Looked Forward to the Kingdom of God

Throughout His suffering, Jesus would keep His mind on His coming resurrection and the kingdom of God. He knew that He would be raised from the dead by the power of God the Father, and would give praise and glory to Him at the future resurrection of the saints, when His kingdom would be established over all the earth: "From You comes my praise in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before those who fear Him [the resurrected saints]. The meek shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek the

LORD shall praise Him; may your heart live forever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD [because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sin]; and all the families of the nations shall worship before You [at His return], for the kingdom is the LORD'S and He rules over the nations.

"All the rich of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him; even he who cannot keep his own soul alive. A seed [those who will be converted during the millennium] shall serve Him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness [as kings and priests] unto a people that shall yet be born, that He has done this [through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ]" (Psa. 22:25-31).

In the final words of His prayer, Jesus asked God the Father to restore Him to the glory that He had with the Father before the world existed. He also prayed for His disciples, and for those who would become His disciples through the preaching of the gospel, that they all might be one with Him and the Father. Here is Jesus' entire prayer: "Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, **the hour has come**; glorify Your own Son, so that Your Son may glorify You; since You have given Him authority over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send. **I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do**.

"And now, **Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You before the world existed**. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things that You have given to Me are from You. For I have given them the words that You gave to Me; and they have received *them* and truly have known that I came from You; and they have believed that You did send Me.

"I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours *are* Mine; and I have been glorified in them. **And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as We *are one***. When I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. I protected those whom You have given Me, and not one of them has perished except the son of perdition, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

"But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them. **I have given them Your words, and the world has hated them** because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would **keep them from the evil one**.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them in Your truth; Your Word is the truth**.

"Even as You did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. **And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they also may be sanctified in *Your* truth**. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word; that **they all may be one, even as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us**, in order that the world may believe that You did send Me.

"**And I have given them the glory that You gave *to* Me, in order that they may be one, in the same way *that* We are one. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me**. Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me where I am, so that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; because **You did love Me before *the* foundation of *the* world**. Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. **And I have made known Your name to them, and will make *it* known** [through His death and resurrection]; **so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them**" (John 17:1-26).

When He finished this prayer, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He knew that He would be betrayed: "After saying these things, Jesus went out with His disciples *to a place* beyond the winter stream of Kidron, where *there* was a garden into which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who was betraying Him, also knew of the place because Jesus had often gathered there with His disciples" (John 18:1-2).

The time had come for Jesus to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and to give His life for their sins and for the sins of the world. By the grace of God, He was going to "taste death for everyone" (Heb. 2:9). His death was not simply the death of a perfect man. IT WAS THE DEATH OF THE CREATOR GOD! ONLY THE DEATH OF THE CREATOR COULD PAY FOR THE SINS OF ALL MANKIND. God personally and willingly took upon Himself the penalty for sin, which is death. Though He had the law of sin and death within His flesh, He never sinned. Thus He could offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

He would experience a cruel death not only at the hands of wicked and treacherous men, **but at the hands of Satan the devil, the author of sin and the enemy of God and man!** At stake was the entire plan of God for all eternity! Could God in the flesh conquer sin and overcome Satan by enduring the suffering and shame of the cross?

The Ordeal Begins

His fervent prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane had brought Jesus strength from the Father (Luke 22:43). Determined to do His Father's will,

Jesus said to His disciples, "Behold, the hour has drawn near, and the Son of man is betrayed into *the* hands of sinners. Arise! Let us be going. Look, the one who is betraying Me is approaching" (Matt. 26:45-46).

Then Jesus stepped forward to meet Judas, who was now possessed of Satan. The prophecy of His arrest was being fulfilled: "And immediately, while He was speaking, Judas, being one of the twelve, came up with a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the one who was betraying Him had given them a sign, saying, '**Whoever I shall kiss, He is *the one*. Arrest Him** and take Him securely away.' And as soon as he came up to Him, he said, 'Master, Master,' and kissed Him earnestly. Then they laid their hands on Him and arrested Him" (Mark 14:43-46).

Jesus was arrested like a common criminal, exactly as the Scriptures had prophesied: "At that point Jesus said to the crowd, 'Have you come out to take Me with swords and clubs, as against a robber? I sat day after day with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not arrest Me. **But all this has happened so that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled**.' Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled [fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7]" (Matt. 26:55-56).

As the chain of agonizing events unfolded—the false accusations and unjust trials, the cruel beatings, humiliating mocking and spitting, brutal scourging and slow death by crucifixion—Jesus Christ remained steadfast in His love, loyalty and faithfulness to God the Father. But the disciples and women who looked upon Jesus' mutilated and bloodied body did not understand what they were witnessing. They stood afar off, watching His crucifixion in stunned bewilderment and disbelief that this could be happening to Jesus Christ, Whom they believed was the Son of God. How could the promised Savior hang beaten and scourged, nailed to the cross in naked shame, dying before their very eyes? They had hoped that He would save them from the Roman oppression and establish the kingdom of God. Now there would be no salvation, not at that time or ever, so they thought, as they witnessed Jesus drawing His last breath on the cross. They did not realize until after the resurrection that **the outpouring of Jesus' blood was the beginning of the salvation of the world**.

The Son of God had died to atone for the sins of the world! As the God Who had created man and woman, His death paid the penalty for the sins of every human being, opening the way for all mankind to receive the gift of eternal life. This was the beginning of the New Covenant, sealed with the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, which would bring salvation to all the world.

On that Passover day, the day of the crucifixion, all the words of the prophets concerning the suffering of the Christ, or the Anointed One, were fulfilled. Their fulfillment in every detail stands today as a lasting, living testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus Christ.

Twenty-Eight Prophecies Fulfilled On the Crucifixion Day

The first prophecy, the oldest of all, had been given by the Lord Himself at the time of man's first sin:

1) The serpent would bruise the seed of the woman.

Prophesied: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15).

Fulfilled: " 'Now is *the* judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to Myself.' But He said this to signify by what death He was about to die" (John 12:31-33).

2) The Messiah would be cut off, but not for Himself, as prophesied by Daniel.

Prophesied: "And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off but not for Himself..." (Dan. 9:26).

Fulfilled: " 'Nor consider that it is better for us that one man die for the people, than that the whole nation should perish.' Now he did not say this of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but also that He might gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (John 11:50-52).

3) The betrayal of Jesus by Judas was foretold by David.

Prophesied: "Even a man, My close friend in whom I trusted, who ate of My bread, has lifted up his heel against Me" (Psa. 41:9).

Fulfilled: "Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order that he might deliver Him up to them. And after hearing *this*, they were delighted, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him" (Mark 14:10-11).

4) Jesus Christ would be forsaken by His disciples, as prophesied by Zechariah.

Prophesied: " 'Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man who is My companion,' says the LORD of hosts. 'Strike the Shepherd [Jesus], and the sheep shall be scattered..." (Zech. 13:7).

Fulfilled: "Then they all forsook Him and fled" (Mark 14:50).

5) The price of His betrayal was also foretold by Zechariah.

Prophesied: "And I said to them, 'If *it is* good, give me my price; and if not, let it go.' So they weighed My price—thirty *pieces* of silver" (Zech. 11:12).

Fulfilled: "*And* said, 'What are you willing to give me, and I will deliver Him up to you?' And they offered him thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:15).

6) Zechariah also foretold what would be done with the betrayal money.

Prophesied: "And the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—a princely price at which I was valued by them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD" (Zech. 11:13).

Fulfilled: "Now when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He was condemned, he changed his mind *and* returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned and have betrayed innocent blood.' But they said, 'What *is that* to us? You see *to it* yourself.' And after throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he went out and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the pieces of silver *and* said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is *the* price of blood.' And after taking counsel, they bought a potter's field with the *pieces of silver*, for a burial ground for strangers" (Matt. 27:3-7).

7) Isaiah prophesied that Jesus Christ would be sacrificed as the Passover Lamb of God.

Prophesied: "...He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter..." (Isa. 53:7).

Fulfilled: "For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7). "Knowing that you were not redeemed by corruptible things,...but by *the* precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; Who truly was foreknown before *the* foundation of *the* world, but was manifested in *these* last times for your sakes" (I Pet. 1:18-20).

8) Isaiah also prophesied the scourging and mocking that He would suffer.

Prophesied: "I gave my back to the smiters [scourgers], and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50:6).

Fulfilled: "Then he released Barabbas to them; but after scourging Jesus, he delivered *Him* up so that He might be crucified. Then the governor's soldiers, after taking Jesus with *them* into the Praetorium, gathered the entire band against Him; and they stripped Him *and* put a scarlet cloak around Him. And after platting a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and bowing *on* their knees before Him, they mocked Him, and *kept on* saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' Then, after spitting on Him, they took the rod and struck *Him* on the head" (Matt. 27:26-30).

9) Both Isaiah and David prophesied that Jesus' body would be mutilated.

Prophesied: "Many were astonished at Him—for *His body was* so disfigured—even His form beyond that of the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14). "I can count all My bones; they look and gloat over Me" (Psa. 22:17).

Fulfilled: "...But after scourging Jesus, he delivered *Him* up so that He might be crucified" (Matt. 27:26). "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged *Him*" (John 19:1).

10) David prophesied the shame and dishonor that Jesus would suffer, being condemned as a criminal.

Prophesied: "...The reproaches of those who reproached You have fallen upon Me....You have known My reproach, and My shame, and My dishonor; My enemies are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Psa. 69:9, 19-20).

Fulfilled: "At that point Jesus said to the crowd, 'Have you come out to take Me with swords and clubs, as against a robber?' " (Matt. 26:55). "...They answered *and* said, 'He is deserving of death!' " (Matt. 26:66).

11) David also foretold that false witnesses would testify against Christ.

Prophesied: "Cruel witnesses rose up; they asked Me of things that I knew nothing about" (Psa. 35:11).

Fulfilled: "And the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were trying to find testimony against Jesus, to put Him to death; but they did not find *any*. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. And some rose up and bore false testimony against Him, saying..." (Mark 14:55-57).

12) Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would not make an effort to defend Himself at the trial.

Prophesied: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

Fulfilled: "Then Pilate said to Him, 'Don't You hear how many things they testify against You?' And He did not answer even one word to him, so that the governor was greatly amazed" (Matt. 27:13-14).

13) Isaiah also foretold Jesus Christ's crucifixion as the sin offering for the world.

Prophesied: "Surely He has borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned each one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all....Yet the LORD willed to crush Him and He has put Him to grief: You shall make His life an offering for sin. He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days, and that the purpose of the LORD might prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul. He shall be fully satisfied. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:4-6, 10-11).

Fulfilled: "Therefore, he then delivered Him up to them so that He might be crucified. Now they took Jesus and led *Him* away. And He went out bearing His own cross to the place called *The Place* of a Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, *one* on this side and *one* on the other side, and Jesus in the middle. And Pilate also wrote a title and put *it* on the cross; and it was written, 'Jesus the Nazarean, the King of the Jews' " (John 19:16-19).

14) As Isaiah had prophesied, He was numbered among lawbreakers.

Prophesied: "...He was counted among the transgressors... (Isa. 53:12).

Fulfilled: "And two other malefactors were also led away with Him to be put to death. And when they came to the place called *Place of* a Skull, there they crucified Him and the malefactors, one on *the* right and one on *the* left" (Luke 23:32-33).

15) David prophesied that His hands and His feet would be pierced.

Prophesied: "Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers have encircled Me; they have pierced My hands and My feet" (Psa. 22:16).

Fulfilled: "Now it was *the* third hour when they crucified Him" (Mark 15:25). "Then the other disciples said to him, 'We have seen the Lord' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, and put my finger into the nail marks, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe at all.' Now after eight days, His disciples again were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus came after the doors were shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace *be* to you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Put forth your finger, and see My hands; and reach *out* your hand, and put *it* into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing' " (John 20:25-27).

16) The parting of His garments was also prophesied by David.

Prophesied: "They divide My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture" (Psa. 22:18).

Fulfilled: "For this reason, they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but let us cast lots for it *to determine* whose it shall be'; that the scripture might be fulfilled which says, 'They divided My garments among them, and they cast lots for My vesture.' The soldiers therefore did these things" (John 19:24).

17) In another psalm, David prophesied that they would give Him vinegar to drink.

Prophesied: "They also gave Me gall for My food; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Psa. 69:21).

Fulfilled: "They gave Him vinegar mingled with gall to drink; but after tasting it, He would not drink" (Matt. 27:34).

18) David also prophesied that many would be watching Jesus during the crucifixion.

Prophesied: "...They look and gloat over Me" (Psa. 22:17).

Fulfilled: "And they sat down there to keep guard over Him" (Matt. 27:36). "And all the people who had gathered together to this sight, after seeing the things that took place, returned beating their breasts" (Luke 23:48).

19) Among those watching would be Jesus' family and friends, who would stand at a distance.

Prophesied: "...My friends stand apart from My plague [wounds]; and My neighbors stand afar off" (Psa. 38:11).

Fulfilled: "But all those who knew Him stood off at a distance observing these things, *the* women also who had accompanied Him from Galilee" (Luke 23:49).

20) Some of His observers would shake their heads at Him.

Prophesied: "And I also became a reproach to them when they looked upon Me; they shook their heads" (Psa. 109:25).

Fulfilled: "Then those who were passing by railed at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who *would* destroy the temple and rebuild *it* in three days, save Yourself. If You are *the* Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:39-40).

21) Even the words of His reproachers were prophesied by David.

Prophesied: "He trusted on the LORD; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, since He delights in Him" (Psa. 22:8).

Fulfilled: " 'He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will *have* Him. For He said, "I am *the* Son of God." ' And the two robbers who were crucified with Him also reproached Him with the same words" (Matt. 27:43-44).

22) Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would make intercession for sinners. This intercession began even during His crucifixion.

Prophesied: "...He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for transgressors" (Isa. 53:12).

Fulfilled: "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And as they divided His garments, they cast lots" (Luke 23:34).

23) David prophesied the thoughts of Jesus at the height of His suffering.

Prophesied: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me, and *why are You so* far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?" (Psa. 22:1).

Fulfilled: "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' " (Matt. 27:46.)

24) Zechariah prophesied that His body would be pierced with a spear.

Prophesied: "...And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced..." (Zech. 12:10).

Fulfilled: "But one of the soldiers had pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water had come out....And again another scripture says, 'They shall look upon Him Whom they pierced' " (John 19:34, 37).

25) David prophesied that Jesus would commit His spirit to God.

Prophesied: "Into Your hand I commit My spirit...(Psa. 31:5).

Fulfilled: "And after crying out with a loud voice, Jesus said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' And when He had said these things, He expired" (Luke 23:46).

26) David also prophesied Jesus' last words.

Prophesied: "...that He has done this" (Psa. 22:31). The Hebrew literally reads, "For it is finished."

Fulfilled: "And so, when Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished.' And bowing His head, He yielded up *His* spirit" (John 19:30).

27) As no bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken (Ex. 12:46), not a bone of His would be broken.

Prophesied: "He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken" (Psa. 34:20).

Fulfilled: "Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first *one*, and *the legs* of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus *and* saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs....For these things took place so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'Not a bone of Him shall be broken' " (John 19:32-33, 36).

28) His burial in the tomb of a rich man was foretold by Isaiah.

Prophesied: "By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and with His generation who did consider that He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He *was* stricken. And he made His grave with the

> wicked [criminals], and with the rich in His death; although He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth" (Isa. 53:8-9).
>
> **Fulfilled:** "And when evening was coming on, a rich man of Arimathea came, named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. After going to Pilate, he begged *to have* the body of Jesus. [Jesus would otherwise have been buried among the criminals]. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given over *to him*. And after taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and placed it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and after rolling a great stone to the door of the tomb, he went away" (Matt. 27:57-60).

All these prophecies were fulfilled by the suffering, death and burial of Jesus Christ on the Passover day Nisan 14, April 5, 30 AD. In the next chapter, we will learn the significance of the timing of Jesus' death and of the miraculous events which occurred on that Passover day.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

JESUS' ONE SACRIFICE FULFILLED ALL

Jesus Christ offered Himself as the supreme sacrifice of God the Father for the sins of mankind. Through His one perfect sacrifice, Jesus purchased redemption from sin for all time. The New Testament reveals that His death fulfilled not only the Passover sacrifice but all the animal sacrifices which were required by the laws that God had given to Moses. All were fulfilled when Jesus died on the Passover day. It was not obligatory that each of these sacrifices be fulfilled separately at the specific time commanded in the Law of God. For Jesus to fulfill every sacrifice on an individual basis would have required Him to die many, many times. But the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus offered "ONE SACRIFICE for sins forever" (Heb. 10:12). That one perfect sacrifice fulfilled ALL the required animal sacrifices and purchased everlasting redemption: "By Whose will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL" (Heb. 10:10).

Paul illustrates this truth in his epistle to the Hebrews by pointing out that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ fulfilled the sin offerings for the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:24-26; 10:1-4). The Day of Atonement is the 10th day of the seventh month, but Jesus died on the Passover day, which is the 14th day of the first month. Although Jesus did not die at the set time for the atonement sacrifices, His death fulfilled the sacrifices which were offered on that day. Likewise, **ALL the animal sacrifices that were offered at the tabernacle and the temple were fulfilled in the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ**.

This Scriptural revelation by the apostle Paul has a great bearing on the timing of Jesus' death. Although Jesus Christ was sacrificed on the Passover day, He did not die at the time that God had appointed for the slaying of the Passover lambs of Exodus 12. Some, who view His sacrifice only as a fulfillment of the Passover, claim that His death was timed to occur during the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. They believe that Jesus Christ died at the exact time that the Passover lambs were being slain by the priests. But Scriptural and historical records of the events which took place on that Passover day do not support this claim. To the contrary, the evidence indicates that no Passover lambs were being sacrificed at the temple at the time that Jesus died. Let us examine the Gospel accounts of the death of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Writers Confirm the Time of Jesus' Death

The Gospel of Matthew clearly records the time that Jesus died: **"And about the ninth hour** [approximately 3 PM], Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' And some of those who were standing there

heard, *and* said, 'This *one* is calling for Elijah.' And immediately one of them ran and, taking a sponge, filled *it* with vinegar and put *it* on a stick, *and* gave *it to* Him to drink. But the rest said, 'Let Him alone! Let us see if Elijah comes to save Him.' *Then another took a spear and thrust it into His side, and out came water and blood.* **And after crying out again with a loud voice, Jesus yielded up *His* spirit**" (Matt. 27:46-50). *For textual evidence to support Matthew's record, see Appendix W.*

Mark confirms that Jesus died toward the end of the Passover day: "And after crying out with a loud voice, Jesus expired. Now **evening** [sunset] **was coming**, *and* since it was *a* preparation (that is, ***the day* before a Sabbath** [the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread])..." (Mark 15:37, 42).

The apostle John is the third witness to confirm the time of Jesus' death: "And so, when Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished.' **And bowing His head, He yielded up *His* spirit**. The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, **because it was a preparation *day* (for that Sabbath** [which would begin at sunset] **was a high day** [the 15th day of the first month, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread]), requested of Pilate that their legs might be broken and *the bodies* be taken away" (John 19:30-31).

The Gospel of Luke also confirms that Jesus died in the late hours of the Passover day. In addition, Luke's account shows that the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was about to begin: "And behold, *there came* a man named Joseph, a member of the council, a good and righteous man, (he did not consent to the council and their deed) from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, and who was also himself waiting for the kingdom of God. He, after going to Pilate, begged *for* the body of Jesus. And after taking it down, he wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb hewn in a rock, in which no one had ever been laid. **Now it was *a* preparation day** [the 14th], **and *a* Sabbath** [the 15th] **was coming on**" (Luke 23:50-54).

There is no question that Jesus died at about the ninth hour, or 3 PM, on the afternoon of the 14th. By the sacrifice of His body and His blood, He sealed the New Covenant, through which all nations may become the children of Abraham by faith and receive the gift of eternal life. Remember that the promise of spiritual seed was given to Abraham at night, on the 14th day of the first month. The covenant that guaranteed this promise was sealed by the blood of an animal sacrifice, which Abraham was commanded to prepare on the daylight portion of the 14th. Abraham completed his preparations on the afternoon of the 14th—foreshadowing the very time that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ would be completed. Jesus died at 3 PM in the afternoon of the 14th day of the first month, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and confirmed by the Gospel accounts of Mark, Luke and John. His one sacrifice on the Passover day fulfilled all the animal sacrifices that were offered at set times throughout the year.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Jesus Was Our Sin Offering

The early Hebrew Christians did not understand that the death of Jesus Christ had fulfilled the animal sacrifices that were commanded under the Old Covenant. They were still looking to the temple sacrifices for sanctification from sin. The apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Hebrews to explain to them that these sacrifices for sin were no longer required. In his epistle, Paul shows that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ had fulfilled all the requirements of the Law for the sin offerings that were made at the temple. As the Law required, the body of Jesus had been offered outside the gates of the city: "We have an altar from which those who are serving the *present earthly* tabernacle do not have authority to eat; for *pertaining to* those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for *a* **sin *offering***, the bodies of all these are burned **outside the camp**. For this reason, **Jesus, in order that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, also suffered OUTSIDE THE GATE**" (Heb. 13:10-12).

The fact that Jesus died outside the gates of Jerusalem verifies that His body was a sin offering. The Law of God specifically commanded that all sin offerings be burned "outside the camp" (Lev. 4:1-2, 11-12, 21; 16:27). The bodies of the sin offerings were taken from the temple and across the Kidron Valley to a place high on the mount of Olives east of the city of Jerusalem. At this place was a special altar called the Miphkad Altar. This altar was located near Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified: "...The *Miphkad Altar* and the sin offerings which were sacrificed on it was really a cardinal part of the Temple complex that existed in the time of Christ. This altar was not one with a ramp leading up to a square elevated area, but it is described in the Mishnah as a pit in which the animals could be burnt to ashes (*Parah 4:2*). The *Miphkad Altar* was located *outside* the walls of the Temple (as Ezekiel 43:21 states), but the roadway [the bridge across the Kidron Valley] leading up to the altar (and including the altar itself) were part of the ritualistic furniture associated with the Temple services....Christ was crucified near the *Miphkad Altar*..." (Martin, *The Secrets of Golgotha*, p. 41).

The location of this altar on the Mount of Olives offered a direct view of the entire temple area. On the Day of Atonement, those who stood at the site of this special altar could observe the high priest as he was standing near the veil of the temple, ready to enter the Holy Place. After the blood of the atonement sacrifices was offered, the bodies of the animals were taken to the altar on the Mount of Olives: "Even the bullock and the goat which were sacrificed on the day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) had to be killed near the Altar of Burnt Offering within the Temple and then their carcasses were required to be taken out the eastern gate to the Miphkad Altar at the Mount of Olives and there they were burnt to ashes (Leviticus 4)" (Ibid., p. 246).

Jesus Christ offered up His body on the Mount of Olives, near the altar where the bodies of all sin offerings were offered up to God. His death fulfilled not only the sin offering, but every animal sacrifice required in the

Law, as symbolized by God's command concerning the ashes from all these sacrifices. The ashes of all the animals that were burned on the altar at the temple were taken to the same place where the sin offerings were burned, and were mingled with the ashes of the sin offerings: "Besides that, **all of the ashes** of the animals killed and burnt in the Temple had to be taken to the area of the Miphkad Altar on Olivet and poured out at the base of the Altar (Leviticus 4:12, 21; 6:11) (where the ashes could descend through a conduit system into the Valley of Kidron below)" (Ibid., p. 246).

Besides the sin offerings, there were two notable exceptions to God's command that all animal sacrifices be offered on the altar at the temple. The first exception was the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, which was instituted before any of the other sacrifices. The Passover was initially sacrificed by the children of Israel while they were still in Egypt, and was killed at the houses of the children of Israel. This ordinance of the Passover was never altered by God. The second exception was the sacrifice of the red heifer, which was slain "without the camp" (Num. 19:3). The red heifer was both killed and burned at the Miphkad Altar. The ceremonial ashes of its wholly burned body were used to sanctify everything at the temple, as well as those who were unclean for various reasons. (These unclean conditions are described in Leviticus 19:9-22.) The sacrifice of the red heifer was also fulfilled by Jesus Christ, Who alone can bring sanctification from sin and cleansing of the heart.

Paul's epistle to the Hebrews clearly shows that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ fulfilled all the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. The fulfillment of these many sacrifices by His one death was foreshadowed by the animals themselves which were required for the different types of sacrifice. Every sacrifice that God commanded, with but few exceptions, included the offering of a lamb or kid goat, symbolizing the future sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. Even the exceptions, like the sacrifice of the red heifer, contained elements which pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Was Our Passover Sacrifice

As the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ was sacrificed on the Passover day. The words of Paul confirm that His death fulfilled the sacrifice of the Passover lamb: "For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7).

The sacrifice of the Passover lamb preceded all other sacrifices that were offered under the Old Covenant. Without the Passover, the Old Covenant could not have been established. The Passover is obviously of primary importance. When we examine Leviticus 23, we find the Passover listed before all of the annual Sabbaths with their sacrifices. All of these annual holy days are based on the sacrifice of the Passover.

Under the Old Covenant, the heads of the households were commanded to sacrifice the Passover lambs. This command of God shows that the observance of the Passover was an individual and personal renewal of the Old Covenant. God never altered His command that the Passover lambs be

killed by the heads of the households. The children of Israel were to participate in the covenant renewal each year without the requirement of going to the tabernacle or temple.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ has commanded His followers to individually renew their relationship with Him and the Father each year by partaking of the footwashing and the symbols of His body and His blood. The Passover of the New Covenant must be observed at the time and in the manner that Jesus commanded. Paul declares that the instructions of the Lord were to observe it "in that night" when Jesus was betrayed, which was the night of Nisan 14. Christians are to renew the New Covenant every year on that night—the same night that Jesus instituted it. According to the commands of Jesus Christ, they are to participate in the footwashing, and in partaking of the broken, unleavened bread and the cup of wine. It is a personal, individual renewal of the New Covenant: "...This cup *is* the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20).

The renewal of the covenant relationship by each Christian is essential to remain in fellowship with Jesus Christ and God the Father. The New Covenant sanctifies individual Christians to God, just as the Old Covenant sanctified the people of Israel to God. The New Covenant relationship must be renewed every year on the Passover day, as commanded by Jesus Christ. This annual renewal was obligatory for the physical descendants of Abraham under the Old Covenant, and it is obligatory for the spiritual seed of Abraham under the New Covenant.

As the Passover of the Old Covenant began the fulfillment of God's promises to the physical seed of Abraham, so the Passover of the New Covenant began the fulfillment of the promises to the spiritual seed. On the Passover night, Jesus Christ instituted the symbols of His body and His blood, which would seal the New Covenant and initiate the fulfillment of God's promises for the spiritual seed. His sacrifice was foreshadowed by the covenant sacrifice that Abraham offered and by all the sacrifices that were offered to God under the Old Covenant. To truly commemorate His sacrifice, we must observe it at the time that Jesus commanded. By obeying this command of Jesus, we can come to a full understanding of His sacrifice, which ended the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant. Through His one perfect sacrifice, He fulfilled not only the Passover, but all the animal sacrifices that were required under the Old Covenant. Jesus Christ was the complete sacrifice of God the Father to fulfill the promises of the New Covenant—the only covenant that offers redemption from sin and the gift of eternal life.

Why Jesus Christ's Death Ended the Old Covenant

Why did the death of Jesus Christ bring the Old Covenant with Israel to an end? How could His death break this binding agreement between the Lord God and His chosen people? According to covenantal law, a covenant that has been sealed with a blood sacrifice cannot be altered or nullified. When God established the Old Covenant with Israel, it was sealed with the blood of animals: "And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basins,

and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the ears of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, 'Behold **the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words**' " (Ex. 24:6-8). The Old Covenant was a binding legal agreement because the oath of the people was ratified by a blood sacrifice. The blood was sprinkled on the people to symbolize the death that the covenant would impose on each one who disobeyed.

When the people of Israel entered the Old Covenant, they vowed to remain faithful to Jehovah Elohim. In return, the Lord God promised to be their protector and provider. This special covenant relationship is likened to a marriage contract: " '...And I swore to you and entered into a covenant with you,' says the Lord GOD. 'And you became Mine' " (Ezek. 16:8). God is described as Israel's husband: "**For your Maker *is* your husband;** the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called" (Isa. 54:5).

As a wife vows to obey her husband, so the people of Israel had pledged to obey the laws and commandments of God. There were blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. (See Deuteronomy 28.) Like a marriage contract, the Old Covenant was binding on both parties—the Lord God and Israel—until the death of either.

When the people of Israel forsook God and broke their pledge of obedience, they came under the curses of the covenant, which included the penalty of death. But God did not choose to enforce the death of all the people of Israel. Rather, the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) chose to become flesh and end the covenant through His own death. The apostle Paul shows how the death of Jesus Christ, Who was Jehovah Elohim in the flesh, brought the Old Covenant relationship to an end: "Are you ignorant, brethren, (for I am speaking to those who know law), that the law rules over a man for as long a time as he may live? For the woman who is married is bound by law to the husband as long as he is living; but if the husband should die, she is released from the law *that bound her* to the husband. So then, if she should marry another man as long as the husband is living, she shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law *that bound her to the husband*, so that she is no longer an adulteress if she is married to another man.

"In the same way, my brethren, you also were made dead to the *marriage* law *of the Old Covenant* by the body of Christ [His death] in order for you to be married to another, Who was raised from *the* dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God....But now we have been released from the law [the marriage relationship of the Old Covenant] because we have died [by being co-joined in the death of Christ at baptism] *to that* in which we were held so that we might serve in newness of *the* spirit [under the New Covenant], and not in *the* oldness of *the* letter [as required by the Old Covenant]" (Rom. 7:1 -6).

Because Jesus Christ the Maker of the covenant—was Jehovah Elohim in the flesh—He was able to terminate the Old Covenant with His death. By taking upon Himself "the curse of the law," which required the death of all Israel, He ended the Old Covenant and released the people to enter the New Covenant. Through faith in His sacrifice, not only the people of Israel but all nations on earth may enter the New Covenant and become the Israel of God (Gal. 3:13-14; 6:15-16).

Those who enter the New Covenant through faith in Jesus Christ are called the new Israel because they are the spiritual seed of Abraham: "And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). The spiritual seed of Abraham belong to Jesus Christ and are members of His body, which is the Church (I Cor. 12:27-28). Like the Old Covenant relationship of physical Israel with Jehovah Elohim, the New Covenant relationship with Jesus Christ is likened to marriage. The New Israel, which is the Church, is fulfilling the role of a wife by submitting to the commands of Jesus Christ and willingly obeying Him (Eph. 5:22, 24). Jesus Christ, as the Head of the Church, is fulfilling the role of a husband by nurturing and protecting the Church (verses 23, 25-27). At the present time the Church is betrothed to Jesus Christ, as Paul writes, "...Because I have espoused you to one husband, so that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Cor. 11:2). The marriage of Jesus Christ and the Church will take place at His return (Rev. 19:7).

The future marriage of Jesus Christ and the Church would not be possible if Jesus Christ had not ended the Old Covenant. The death of Jesus Christ ended the Old Covenant marriage relationship between the Lord God and physical Israel, opening the way for the New Covenant relationship with spiritual Israel. **Jehovah Elohim, the God of the Old Testament, died, as He had pledged in His covenant with Abraham. The death of Jehovah Elohim terminated the Old Covenant and opened the way for the New Covenant**.

The New Testament names of God show that the New Covenant is based on a family relationship. Those who enter the New Covenant are the children of God and are able to call Him their Father. His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is their Savior and future husband. This wonderful relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ is offered only through the New Covenant, which has replaced the Old Covenant with the physical seed of Abraham.

Significance of the Events at the Time of Jesus' Death

The unparalleled events that took place during the crucifixion of Jesus Christ were a divine manifestation of the termination of the Old Covenant. While Jesus was dying on the cross in pain and agony, four spectacular events took place. These four events were:

1) Darkness covered Jerusalem and the entire geographical area.
2) The veil of the temple was ripped down the middle from top to bottom.

3) A great earthquake shook Jerusalem.
4) The huge brass doors of the Holy Place behind the veil were opened by invisible hands.

All these events had a great impact on the temple ceremonies which were scheduled for that day, including the traditional temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. Matthew and Luke record the approximate time of these phenomenal events. The first event was a tremendous darkness, which blotted out the sun: "Now from *the* sixth hour [noon] until *the* ninth hour [approximately 3 PM], darkness was over all the land" (Matt. 27:45).

This great darkness was more than heavy, dark clouds covering the sun. It is recorded that darkness covered the land. The darkness must have resembled the blackness of night. This darkness ended at "about the ninth hour," which was approximately 3 PM. As we have previously learned, that was the time when the Passover lambs were scheduled to be slain at the temple for the traditional 14/15 Passover. The long period of darkness in the height of the afternoon must have caused great difficulty for those who were preparing for the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

From a spiritual perspective, these were the darkest hours in the history of the world. God in the flesh was suffering the slow, agonizing death of crucifixion. While Jesus hung on the cross, dying a most ignominious death, there were those who were taking their Passover lambs to the temple for their sacrifices: "...the people who were carrying their Passover lambs to be killed in the Temple at the time of Christ's crucifixion were turning their backs on the individual to whom they were intending to present those Passover lambs. This is because the roadway that led to the eastern gate of the Temple was descending from the top of the Mount of Olives. The people would have passed directly by Christ hanging on the tree of crucifixion. And while the worshippers were entering the Temple to pay tribute to the One sitting within the Holy of Holies (originally enthroned between two cherubim), the crowds were actually turning their backs on the real Christ from heaven..." (Martin, *The Secrets of Golgotha*, p. 263).

The phenomenal events that followed the period of darkness must have completely disrupted the scheduled killing of the Passover lambs. These events occurred at the same time that Jesus died—**about the ninth hour**. The word "about" implies that it was immediately before the ninth hour, just before the darkness ended: "And about [near] the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'....But the rest said, 'Let Him alone! Let us see if Elijah comes to save Him.' *Then another took a spear and thrust it into His side, and out came water and blood*. And after crying out again with a loud voice, Jesus yielded up *His* spirit. **And suddenly the veil of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks were split**..." (Matt. 27:46-51). *See Appendix W*.

The earthquake that struck the area of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death was of such magnitude that it caused huge rocks to crack open. The

powerful shaking of the earth opened the graves of many saints who had recently died. They were miraculously restored to life after the resurrection of Jesus by the power of God and appeared to many in the city of Jerusalem (Matt. 27:52-53).

The earthquake and the ripping of the veil occurred immediately after Jesus died, just before the lambs were scheduled to be killed at the temple. These phenomenal events had a significant effect on functions that were in progress at the temple. When the veil of the temple split, those who were assembling to kill their Passover lambs had to immediately leave the area because the Holy Place was exposed to their view.

No Passover Lambs Could Be Sacrificed at the Temple on that Day

With the veil ripped in two, and the open brass doors exposing the Holy Place to the view of all, the entire temple area must have been thrown into complete disarray. The Jews who were preparing to sacrifice their Passover lambs had to clear the temple area. It was impossible for the priests to begin the sacrifice of the Passover lambs. By law, the temple area was rendered ceremonially unclean and unfit for service from the time that the veil was ripped in two and the brass doors to the Holy Place were opened, exposing it to public view. Moreover, the violent earthquake had broken the huge stone lintel from which the veil was suspended, and some of the priests may have been injured by pieces of stone. If any injuries had spilled even one drop of human blood in the temple area, the entire area would have been unclean and unfit for any sacrificing to be performed.

From the moment the earthquake struck, all operations at the temple had to cease immediately until the damage could be repaired and the temple could be ceremonially cleansed and rededicated. The rededication alone would have required at least seven days. The temple service could not resume immediately after the earthquake, with all the damage remaining.

Consider the effect that the earthquake must have had on the Jews who were assembled in the temple area, waiting for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs to begin. They would already have experienced a sense of foreboding because of the hours of eerie darkness. When they felt the earth shake and saw the awesome sight of the veil being ripped in two as the huge stone lintel came crashing to the ground, they must have been filled with fear. There could be no doubt in their minds that this was the hand of God. A near hysterical mass exodus from the temple area must have taken place as the people fled in terror. (The author's description of the people's behavior during this terrifying event is based on his personal experience as a resident of California. The author lives near the San Andreas fault line and has witnessed the reactions of many people during earthquakes. His depiction of the people present at the temple during the earthquake which split the veil in two is not an exaggeration of the Scriptural events. It is a realistic portrayal of the events that took place at the temple when that earthquake of great magnitude struck without warning.)

To comprehend the magnitude of the force that split the veil of the temple, it is important for us to understand how this veil was made. It was not a thin, lace-like curtain, as many people have assumed. The veil of the temple was mammoth, as Rabbi Alfred Edersheim's description shows: "The Veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand [4-6 inches], and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined together; and these Veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 300 priests to manipulate each. If the Veil was at all such as is described in the Talmud, it could not have been rent in twain [torn in two] by a mere earthquake or the fall of the lintel, although its composition in squares fastened together might explain, how the rent might be as described in the Gospel.

"Indeed, everything seems to indicate that, although the earthquake might furnish the physical basis, the rent of the Temple-Veil was—with reverence be it said—really made by the Hand of God" (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p. 611).

This beautiful, huge (30 x 60 foot) veil was hanging on the outside of the temple on the east side, over the entrance to the Holy Place. It hung from a tremendous stone lintel, which was approximately thirty feet long and weighed about thirty tons. This stone lintel was sixty feet (approximately six to eight stories) above the entrance to the Holy Place. Behind this thick (4-6 inch) veil were huge brass doors which opened into the Holy Place, the first part of the Holies. These brass doors were opened only once a day when the incense was burned on the incense altar. As soon as the priest went in, they were immediately closed until he was ready to come out after offering the incense. The only other occasion when they were opened was on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies. But at the moment of Jesus' death, they were miraculously opened when the earthquake occurred. Here is Edersheim's opinion of the historical records of those huge brass doors opening without human hands:

"That some great catastrophe, betokening the impending destruction of the Temple, had occurred in the Sanctuary about this very time, is confirmed by not less than four mutually independent testimonies: those of Tacitus (Hist. v. 13), of Josephus (War 6.5.3), of the Talmud (Jer. Yoma 43c; Yoma 39b), and of earliest Christian tradition. The most important of these are, of course, the Talmud and Josephus. The latter speaks of the mysterious extinction of the middle and chief light in the Golden Candlestick, forty years before the destruction of the Temple; and both he and the Talmud refer to a supernatural opening by themselves of the great temple-gates [the huge brass doors behind the veil] that had been previously closed, which was regarded as a portent of the coming destruction of the Temple. We can scarcely doubt, that some historical fact must underlie so peculiar and widespread a tradition, and we cannot help feeling that it may be a distorted version of the occurrence of the rending of the Temple-Veil (or of its report) at the Crucifixion of Christ" (Ibid., p. 610).

Speaking of Edersheim's conclusions, Martin says, "This would be the logical conclusion because the doors were positioned directly in back of the curtain itself! For the tearing of the curtain to be a symbolic gesture that God the Father had now 'destroyed' the barrier into the Holy of Holies itself, then the symbol would have been meaningless had the doors behind the curtain remained closed. In fact, for the intended symbol to have had any relevance whatever, the two events would have had to occur simultaneously.

"So spectacular would both events have been (the tearing of the curtain and the opening of the doors) that it would have been most unusual for such circumstances to have happened at different times in the same year. Only a simultaneous occurrence makes any sense at all..." (*Secrets of Golgotha*, pp. 229-230).

Unlike Edersheim, Martin holds that the earthquake and the falling lintel were sufficient forces to rend the veil and to open the doors behind it: "...The two events would have had to occur at the same time. But how was it possible for the doors to the Holy Place to open? A Jewish Christian work of the early second century called 'the Gospel of the Nazareans' said that the large stone lintel which supported the curtain (which no doubt had the inner doors attached to it for stability) split in two when the curtain was severed (cf. Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. I, pp. 150, 153). Remember that there was a major earthquake at the precise time of Christ's death, and this [the force of this upheaval] could have been the cause for fracturing the stone lintel. There is no reason to deny the possibility that the collapse of the overhead lintel (which was an enormous stone at least 30 feet long and weighing probably 30 tons) was the 'natural cause' of the curtain tearing in two. The fact that the curtain was severed from the top to the bottom also suggests that it was the force of the falling lintel that caused the curtain to rend. This collapse could also have been the means by which the inner doors next to the curtain were forced open. The crashing down of 30 tons of stone from the height of an eight story building could surely have opened the two doors that were directly next to the falling stonework" (Ibid., pp. 18-19).

Significantly, the earthquake and the ripping of the veil were seen by the centurion and other soldiers who were guarding Jesus at the time of His death. Although Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives, about a quarter of a mile from the temple, the view from the mountain offered a direct line of sight into the entire temple area. When the earth shook and the huge lintel broke and fell, the centurion and his troops could see the veil of the temple split from top to bottom. At the same time, the huge brass doors directly behind the veil were opened. So awesome was this sight that "...the centurion and those with him who had been keeping guard over Jesus, after seeing [and undoubtedly hearing] the earthquake and the things that took place [the falling lintel and the ripping of the huge veil at the temple of God], were filled with fear, *and* said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!' " (Matt. 27:54.)

Edersheim gives this depiction of what was transpiring at the temple: "As we compute, it may just have been the time when, at the Evening-

Sacrifice [which was always completed before the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs began], the officiating Priesthood entered the Holy Place, either to burn the incense or to do other sacred service there. To see before them...the Veil of the Holy Place rent from top to bottom—that beyond it they could scarcely have seen—and hanging in two parts from its fastenings above and at the side, was, indeed, a terrible portent, which would soon become generally known, and must, in some form or other, have been preserved in tradition. And they all must have understood, that it meant that God's Own Hand had rent the Veil, and for ever deserted and thrown open that Most Holy Place..." (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, pp. 611-612).

Because the ripping of the veil and the opening of the brass doors to the Holy Place occurred before the ninth hour, when the killing of the Passover lambs was scheduled to begin, **it is evident that no Passover lambs were killed at the temple on the day that Jesus died**. God the Father openly intervened and repudiated the traditional temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. God had never commanded it in the first place! The traditional 14/15 Passover did not honor God. It was a self-righteous tradition that the Jews were observing in place of the commands of God, and He rejected it in a powerful and dramatic way.

Whether through the earthquake or by direct intervention, it was the power of God that caused the collapse of the thirty-ton lintel, which crashed down on the court of the priests near the altar of burnt offering, resulting in extensive damage to the temple area. There is historical evidence that there was, in fact, damage to the judgment hall of the Sanhedrin, which was located in the temple near the court of the priests. Dr. Martin relates the following:

"But what has this [the tearing of the veil and the falling lintel] to do with the Sanhedrin having to abandon the Chamber of Hewn Stones in which they normally met? It has very much to do with it. If an earthquake of the magnitude capable of breaking the stone lintel at the top of the entrance to the Holy Place was occurring at the exact time of Christ's death, then what would such an earthquake have done to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (a vaulted and columned structure) no more than 40 yards away from where the stone lintel fell and the curtain tore in two?

"There is every reason to believe, though the evidence is circumstantial, that the Chamber of Hewn Stones was so damaged in the same earthquake that it became structurally unsafe from that time forward. Something like this had to have happened because the Sanhedrin would not have left this majestic chamber (to take up residence in the insignificant 'Trading Place') unless something approaching this explanation took place.

"If this is actually what happened (and I have no doubt that it did), we then have a most remarkable witness that God the Father engineered every action happening on the day of Christ's trial and crucifixion. It means that the judgment made by the official Sanhedrin against Jesus within the

Chamber of Hewn Stones *was THE LAST JUDGMENT* ever given by the official Sanhedrin in their majestic chambers within the Temple! It would show that God the Father demonstrated by the earthquake at Christ's death that the sentence of the Sanhedrin against Jesus would be the last judgment it would ever make in that authorized place!" (*The Secrets of Golgotha*, pp. 230-231.)

While this evidence of additional destruction at the temple is circumstantial, there is no question that the sacrificial area of the temple was rendered inoperable. It was ceremonially unclean by reason of the exposure of the Holy Place, which prevented the sacrifice of the Passover lambs on the day that Jesus died. God allowed no time for the traditional sacrifice of the lambs when He ripped the veil in two and opened the brass doors into the Holy Place. These awesome events, which occurred at the exact time of Jesus' death, demonstrated that the temple and its priesthood were no longer needed. All the sacrifices and offerings that were required by the Old Covenant had been fulfilled in Christ!

Important Factors in the Timing of Jesus' Death

The New Testament does not support the claim that Jesus' death was timed to coincide with the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs. To the contrary, the Gospel records make it quite clear that God repudiated this Jewish tradition and did not allow it to compete with the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. Remember that during this period in history, most of the Jews were observing a domestic Passover, with the lambs being killed at *ben ha arbayim*, or "between the two evenings," at the beginning of the 14th. Although this was the commanded time for killing the Passover lambs, Jesus did not die at that time. Nor did He die while the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs was taking place. He did not die when any Passover lambs were being slain.

The Scriptures reveal that Jesus Christ, as Jehovah Elohim in the flesh, died to fulfill the promises He had made when He covenanted with Abraham. Those promises were given on the night which began the 14th day of the first month—the same night that Jesus delivered the promises of the New Covenant. The sacrifice that sealed the covenant with Abraham was prepared in the daylight hours of the 14th and was completed in the afternoon—the same time that Jesus completed His sacrifice on the cross, which sealed the New Covenant (Gen. 15:9-11, Matt. 27:46-50).

The Scriptures reveal a number of reasons that Jesus did not die at the beginning of the Passover day, during the time that God commanded for slaying the Passover lambs: First, Jesus did not fulfill the Passover sacrifice alone, but all the sacrifices that were commanded under the Old Covenant (Heb. 10:5-9). For this reason, He did not die at the set time for any sacrifice. Second, it was essential for the New Covenant to be instituted on the Passover night (Matt. 26:28, Luke 22:20). Jesus could not have done this if He had been killed at *ben ha arbayim*, or "between the two evenings." Third, Jesus had to die a public death and be displayed in notoriety before

the world (Isa. 52:14; 53:4-12). There would have been few eyewitnesses if He had died at the same time that the lambs for the domestic Passover were being killed—at the beginning of the 14th, during *ben ha arbayim*.

Another question about the timing of Jesus' death has been asked: Since God passed over the children of Israel at midnight on the Passover day, why was not Jesus killed at midnight? The first reason is that at midnight there would not be sufficient eyewitnesses for His death to be public. The second reason is that Jesus had to be tried by the Roman authorities, who did not hold court at midnight.

All questions about the timing of Jesus' death are resolved when we understand that His death was foreshadowed by the sacrifice that sealed His covenant with Abraham. All the prophecies about Himself—His trials, scourging, suffering, crucifixion and death—were fulfilled during the very hours that Abraham had prepared the covenant sacrifice.

There is another very important reason that Jesus died in the afternoon of the day. In order to fulfill the sign of His Messiahship—that He would be in the tomb exactly three days and three nights—it was necessary that He die in the late hours of the day. His death in the afternoon allowed His body to be placed in the tomb at the end of the Passover day. If He had been placed in the tomb before the end of the day, He would not have fulfilled the sign of being in the heart of the earth for three whole days and three whole nights.

Although Jesus died on the Passover day, He fulfilled much more than the Passover sacrifice. The death of Jesus Christ was the ultimate sacrifice of God the Father. The timing of His death was determined by God the Father and foreshadowed by the covenant sacrifice that Abraham was commanded to prepare. His death was pledged in the days of Abraham and was pictured in all the sacrifices and offerings that were commanded under the Old Covenant. His one perfect sacrifice fulfilled them all. Now He is the resurrected Christ, seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven above as the living Savior, enabling all who accept His sacrifice to become the spiritual seed of Abraham and receive the gift of eternal life. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant—the immortal High Priest Who continually intercedes for the spiritual seed before the throne of God the Father.

The promise of eternal life through the New Covenant was sealed by the beaten, scourged body of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of His blood on the Passover day. The ceremony that commemorates His supreme sacrifice for the sins of the world was instituted on the night He was betrayed. That is when His disciples partook of the symbols of His body and His blood, and that is when all His followers are commanded to partake of these symbols.

By partaking of the footwashing, the bread and the wine during the Christian Passover ceremony, true Christians are commemorating the death of Jesus Christ as the sacrifice that sealed the New Covenant, which offers

forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. Each Christian who takes part in this ceremony is confirming his or her acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and is renewing his or her commitment to live by the words of the New Covenant. The New Covenant can only be renewed at the time and in the manner that Jesus Christ instituted.

Each Christian who personally renews the New Covenant is able to receive continuing forgiveness and grace from God the Father, Who applies the blood of Jesus Christ to his or her sins (I John 1:7-9). This daily cleansing from sin allows Christians to remain in fellowship with God the Father, Who imparts strength and understanding to each one through His Holy Spirit. Every Christian who is led by the Holy Spirit will be growing in spiritual knowledge and godly character, and will ultimately receive the gift of eternal life in the kingdom of God (II Pet. 1:4-11). That is how the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ is fulfilling the promise of eternal life.

The Mystery of Godliness

God has revealed in His Word that His desre is to grant eternal life to all mankind. So marvelous is God's purpose for man that the apostle Paul calls it "**the mystery of godliness**." This great mystery of God is the very reason for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: "And undeniably, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in *the* flesh, was justified in the Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among *the* Gentiles, was believed on in *the* world, was received up in glory" (I Tim. 3:16).

It was to raise up sons and daughters for God the Father that Jesus Christ was manifested in the flesh. As the Lord God of the Old Testament, Who had created all things, He emptied Himself of His divine, eternal existence and was made in the likeness of man. He took upon Himself the same sinful flesh that all human beings have, in order to die as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Through faith in His sacrifice, all mankind can receive the gift of salvation, with the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Jesus' own words show that the desire and pleasure of God the Father is to grant eternal life in His kingdom to those who believe in His Son: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for **your Father delights in giving you the kingdom**" (Luke 12:32).

Jesus Christ was the first of many who will rise from the grave as immortal spirit beings (Rom. 8:29). At the return of Jesus Christ, an innumerable number of Christians will be granted eternal life as the spirit sons and daughters of God the Father. They will share the same eternal existence and glory as Jesus Christ. Paul makes this very clear: "The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, **heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—**if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be **glorified together with Him**. For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with **the glory that shall be revealed in us**" (Rom. 8:16-18).

The apostle John confirms that the children of God will be like Jesus Christ. "Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; **but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is**" (I John 3:1-2)

Like Jesus Christ, true Christians will be resurrected to glory and immortality, fulfilling the prophecy that He would raise up spiritual seed: "...You shall make His life an offering for sin. **He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days** [as the resurrected Christ], **and that the purpose of the LORD might prosper in His hand**. He shall see [the result] of the travail of His soul. He shall be fully satisfied..." (Isa. 53:10-11).

As Paul shows, God's plan of salvation, which was a mystery even to the angels, has been hidden from the world (II Cor. 4:3-4). But through the Holy Spirit, the mystery of salvation was revealed to the apostles and prophets of the early Church, who were used by God to enlighten many others: "**How He made known to me** [Paul] **by revelation the mystery** (even as I wrote briefly before, so that when you read *this*, you will be able to comprehend **my understanding in the mystery of Christ**), which in other generations **was not made known to the sons of men**, as it has **now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by *the* Spirit;** that the Gentiles might be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God, *which was* given to me through the inner working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, was this grace given, that I might preach the gospel among the Gentiles—*even* the unsearchable riches of Christ; and **that I might enlighten all *as to* what *is* the fellowship of the mystery that has been hidden from the ages in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ** (Eph. 3:3-9).

The mystery of godliness, which God has revealed to His saints, is the knowledge that Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and that by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ dwells within each one whom the Father calls, enabling each believer to overcome the law of sin and death and to receive eternal life at the resurrection: "***Even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints**; to whom God did will to make known what *is* the riches of **the glory of this mystery** among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col. 1:26-27).

In describing the mystery of godliness, Paul declares that God not only was "manifested in *the* flesh" but also "was justified in *the* Spirit" (I Tim. 3:16). How was Jesus Christ, as **God in the flesh, justified in the Spirit?** Because Jesus Christ never sinned, He did not need justification from sin. How then was He justified in the Spirit? He was justified in the Spirit because He took upon Himself the same judgment that was pronounced upon Adam and Eve and all mankind, being made in the likeness of sinful flesh with the law of sin and death. Although He was tempted like all

other human beings, He overcame the law of sin and death and Satan the devil, the author of sin, through the power of the Holy Spirit. He condemned sin in the flesh by living a perfect life, not once yielding to the pulls of the flesh, but always being led by the Holy Spirit of God the Father. That is how God was justified in the Spirit.

Because Jesus Christ, as God in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit, He has opened the way for all things on earth and in heaven to be reconciled to God the Father: "Giving thanks to the Father, **Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints** in the light; Who has **personally rescued us from the power of darkness** [Satan the devil] and has transferred *us* unto the kingdom of the Son of His love [by giving us the power of His Holy Spirit]; in Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins; **Who is *the* image of the invisible God, *the* firstborn of all creation**; because by Him were all things created, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him.

"And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church; Who is ***the* beginning, *the* firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He Himself might hold the preeminence**. For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven" (Col. 1:12-20).

Jesus Christ was the first fleshly human being to be resurrected from the grave as a glorified spirit being. Through His one perfect sacrifice, multiple millions will be added to the kingdom of God, sharing His glory and immortality as His brethren: "But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering the death, in order that **by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone;** because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, **in bringing many sons unto glory**, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. **For both He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified *are* all of one** [one Father]; **for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren**" (Heb. 2:9-11).

The hope of being glorified like Jesus Christ and living with Him forever in the kingdom of God brings true meaning to the observance of the Christian Passover. Every true Christian who shares this hope will be faithfully keeping this solemn ceremony each year on the night that Jesus instituted it. Each one will participate in the footwashing in order to have a part with Jesus Christ in this life and in His kingdom. Each one will partake of the bread and the wine in order to renew the New Covenant and remain under the blood of Jesus Christ throughout the coming year. Each one will determine to live by every word of the New Covenant through the power of the Holy Spirit in order to grow spiritually. This personal renewal of the New Covenant through the Christian Passover ceremony will enable each one to qualify for the glorious inheritance that awaits the children of God.

Conclusion

This book offers the reader a detailed and thoroughly documented study of the Passover as observed in both Old Testament and New Testament times. As recorded in the Old Testament, the Passover was observed on the 14th day of the first month—the same day that the Lord God, Jehovah Elohim, had delivered His promises to Abraham. It was on this day that God gave Abraham the promise of both physical and spiritual blessings for his seed. The promise of physical blessings was fulfilled through the Old Covenant with Israel, and the promise of spiritual blessings is being fulfilled through the New Covenant with the Church.

When the time came to end the Old Covenant and establish the New Covenant, the Lord God, Jehovah Elohim, became Jesus Christ—God in the flesh. Through His death, He terminated the Old Covenant and sealed the promises of the New Covenant. He delivered these promises on the night of Nisan 14—the same time that the promises were given to Abraham, and the same day that the Passover of the Old Covenant was instituted. The Old Covenant was established 430 years after the covenant with Abraham and lasted for approximately 1500 years. The Old Covenant came to an end on April 5 in AD 30 when Jesus died on the Passover day—the 14th day of the first month. In ending the Old Covenant with Israel, Jesus Christ initiated a new beginning. That new beginning was the New Covenant with the Church.

Many new beginnings are recorded in the Bible. When the Old World ended with the Flood, there was a new beginning with Noah and his sons after the Flood. After the death of Noah, there was a new beginning with Abraham. Four generations later, there was a new beginning with Israel, initiated by the Passover in Egypt and culminating in the ratification of the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai. That covenant ended with the death of Jesus Christ, which placed the New Covenant in force and effect. The New Covenant is raising up spiritual seed, who will have a new beginning when Jesus Christ returns. They will become glorified spirit beings and will rule with Him on earth during the millennium. When the millennium has ended, there will be a new beginning for all generations of human beings who have died and gone to the grave. All will be restored in the flesh and will have the opportunity to choose the way of eternal life during the time of the great judgment. After this period of judgment, the earth will be consumed with fire and all the wicked will be destroyed, preparing the way for the new heavens and the new earth, which will begin the "Ages of Eternity" for the family of God.

Jesus Christ has revealed that He is the one Who begins and ends these major epochs in the plan of God: " 'I am Alpha and Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* Ending,' says the Lord, 'Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty' " (Rev. 1:8). It was Jesus Christ Who initiated the New Covenant on the Passover day, the 14th day of the first month. Jesus

Himself established this day by His commands and by His example! Jesus Himself set this time for the renewal of the New Covenant by each Christian.

Jesus Christ Himself established the 14th day of the first month as the day to observe the Christian Passover ceremony, which commemorates the beginning of the New Covenant in His blood, and renews the covenant relationship of each Christian with Him and God the Father. Men in their self-righteousness have rejected His commands and have changed the date of its observance, the time of day, the symbols, the frequency of observance, and the meaning. But men do not have the authority to change and modify what Jesus Himself established by His own personal commands!

The Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament are filled with evidence that the 14th day of the first month in the Calculated Hebrew calendar is the Passover day that God ordained. The Scriptural and historical records make it undeniably clear that the observance of a 15th Passover was a tradition of the Jews and was never commanded by God. The tradition of a 15th Passover is in direct opposition to the Word of God, which establishes the 14th as the Passover day. The New Covenant cannot be renewed on the 15th day of the first month because that day does not commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. Error does not agree with truth. The truth is that the Scriptures—both Old Testament and New Testament—absolutely establish and uphold the 14th as the Passover day—the day that Jesus instituted the New Covenant in His blood. That is the only day that the covenant can be renewed.

Participating in Easter services cannot renew the New Covenant. Not only is Easter observed on the wrong day, but it has been derived from paganism, and it is specifically condemned in the Word of God. The Bible condemns Easter because it originated with the worship of the Babylonian goddess Isthar (pronounced Easter), the so-called "queen of heaven." Those who participate in Easter sunrise celebrations do not realize that God views these services as sun-worship and idolatry (See Ezek. 8:15-16). The celebration of the Mass, or partaking of the so-called "Holy Eucharist," cannot renew the New Covenant, because it does not follow the express commands of Jesus Christ. It is celebrated on the wrong days, at wrong times in the day, and it uses the wrong symbols. It, too, has been derived from paganism—not from the Word of God. Neither can the weekly observance of Communion or the Lord's Supper renew the New Covenant. It is also observed on the wrong day and at the wrong time, and in most cases uses the wrong symbols. Furthermore, the New Testament shows that the Christian Passover ceremony should not be called the "Lord's Supper." None of these substitute practices of men conform to the truth of God's Word.

God will not accept any of these religious counterfeits in worship of Him. The God of truth cannot be worshiped with a lie! This kind of worship is useless and vain, even as Jesus said: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine the commandments of men" (Mark 7:6-7).

THE ONLY TRUE RENEWAL OF THE NEW COVENANT IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE ANNUAL CHRISTIAN PASSOVER OBSERVANCE. Any other practice than that which Jesus Himself has commanded—regardless of the perceived need, the sincerity, proclaimed sanctity or alleged religious authority—cannot renew the New Covenant. No practice or observance that is contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ can keep anyone in covenant with God! They are the traditions of men and do not lead to eternal life. Only those who renew the New Covenant of grace at the time and in the manner that Jesus Christ commanded—through participation in the Christian Passover on the 14th day of the first month—have the promise of eternal life. Observing any other practice is sin and will ultimately bring death: "The wages of sin *is* death" (Rom. 6:23).

Christians who sin by disobeying the commands of Jesus Christ are not under the New Covenant of eternal life but are actually in covenant with death. The prophet Isaiah shows that those who reject the truth of God and cling to the lies of men are in covenant with death: "Therefore hear the Word of the LORD, you scornful men who rule this people in Jerusalem because you have said, '**We have made a covenant with death, and we have made an agreement with the grave;** when the overwhelming rod shall pass through, it shall not come to us; **for we have made lies our refuge, and we have hidden ourselves under falsehood**,' therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I place in Zion a Stone for a foundation, tried Stone, a precious Cornerstone, a sure Foundation..." (Isa. 28:14-16).

This prophecy of Isaiah clearly shows that the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ are the foundation of eternal life. Those who reject His commands and surround themselves with lies and falsehoods are in covenant with death. This is a true description of the traditional practices of Judaism and of mainstream Christianity. Since their practices are not the practices of Jesus Christ, they do not lead to eternal life, but bring death to all who follow them.

Jesus Christ has revealed the ONLY WAY to enter the New Covenant and receive the gift of eternal life from God the Father. He Himself established the New Covenant with His own blood, and He Himself reveals the ONE TRUE WAY to enter that special relationship with the Father. Jesus declared: "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me**" (John 14:6). Jesus also said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, **draws him**..." (John 6:44). The covenant relationship begins with God the Father's calling. Each individual must respond to God's calling by repenting of sin and being baptized in water, which represents being co-joined into the covenant death of Jesus Christ. When these conditions are fulfilled, God the Father grants the gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables each one to worship God in loving obedience to His Word, which is the Truth: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH; for the Father is indeed seeking those who worship Him in this manner. **God *is* spirit, and those who worship Him must** [Greek *dei*, obligated, under divine compulsion] **worship in spirit and in truth**" (John 4:23-24).

Conclusion

The use of the Greek *dei* shows that it is imperative to worship God according to the truth of His Word as revealed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not making a suggestion—**IT IS A COMMAND. The Greek text is most emphatic!**

Christians who are truly in covenant with God the Father will continually be worshiping Him in spirit and in truth. They will be practicing the teachings of Jesus Christ, which He received from the Father. They will be observing the Christian Passover ceremony each year on the 14th day of the first month—the day that Jesus established for the renewing of the covenant relationship. They will observe this ceremony at the time of day that Jesus instituted the new symbols and in the proper manner that He Himself commanded, participating in the footwashing, and partaking of the unleavened bread and the wine.

After instituting the new Passover ceremony on the night that He was betrayed, Jesus gave the following command to His disciples. These words are foundational to the New Covenant: "If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments....The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him....If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (John 14:15, 21, 23). Jesus' words are clear. Those who love Him will be keeping His commandments, including His command to observe the Christian Passover on the night of His betrayal. On the other hand, those who do not love Him will not be keeping His commandments, which He received from God the Father: "**The one who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's, Who sent Me**" (John 14:24).

The words of Jesus Christ, which He received from the Father, are the foundation of the New Covenant. Anyone who rejects the words of Jesus Christ cannot be in covenant with God the Father. **The covenant relationship is not open to those who vainly worship God with the humanly devised tradition of a 15th Passover, or the Eucharist, or Communion, or the Lord's Supper**. The New Covenant relationship is offered only to those who love Jesus Christ and God the Father and are keeping Their commandments.

The New Covenant relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father must be renewed each year by participating in the Christian Passover. The true observance of the Christian Passover involves far more than understanding the time and manner that Jesus commanded. It extends far beyond doctrinal disputes and differing opinions of Bible students, ministers and theologians. It transcends all religious arguments and strife over words. The Christian Passover is the foundation of God's plan for those whom He calls—now and for eternity!

God the Father's plan is being accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Passover: "But we see Jesus, Who *was* made

a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering the death, in order that **by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone**; because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, **to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings**" (Heb. 2:9-10).

No other sacrifice can possibly replace or be substituted for the awesome sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His blood alone can reconcile sinful human beings to God the Father. As each one is reconciled, the risen Christ acts as High Priest at the right hand of God, daily obtaining God's loving grace: "But God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ (***For* you have been saved by grace.**), And He has raised *us* up together [through the operation of baptism] and has caused *us* to sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus [Who is our hope of glory], so that in the ages that *are* coming He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

"For **by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not** [Greek *ouk*, the impossibility of] of your own selves; *IT IS* THE GIFT OF GOD, not [Greek *ouk*, the impossibility of] **of** works, so that no one may boast. For we are HIS [GOD THE FATHER'S] WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS unto *the* good works [of faith, love and obedience] that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them" (Eph. 2:4-10).

These words of Paul reveal God the Father's magnificent love and grace toward each one whom He calls through Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul was granted a deep spiritual understanding of the grace of God and His awesome plan for mankind. Paul was inspired to record these divine revelations in his epistle to the Ephesians. The author has expanded the inspired words of Paul in Ephesians 3 in a special amplified translation to focus on God the Father's magnificent plan and purpose for man. The author's amplified translation has been designed to go beyond other amplified versions in that the meaning of the entire Bible is brought to bear on every verse. The author's translation expands and amplifies each word to bring out its full meaning, without listing references to other verses, as would be necessary for a technical presentation. The author has translated the passage in this manner to capture the full meaning and inspiration of Paul's words to the Ephesians. The author's hope is that this translation will enable the reader to comprehend more fully the plan of God and His awesome purpose for those who accept Jesus Christ as their Passover. This glorious eternal inheritance is freely offered to you—if you are willing to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength, as Jesus said.

EPHESIANS 3

1. For this very reason and cause, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of, and for, you Gentiles;

2. If truly you have heard of the administration and stewardship [ministry] of the grace of God, which was granted and entrusted to me in your behalf;
3. How that by direct, divine revelation He made known to me [giving me comprehension and understanding of] the mystery of His plan (according as I previously wrote to you briefly,
4. Whereby you are able, when you read this, to perceive and comprehend my understanding and knowledge [such as only God can grant] of the mystery of Christ);
5. Which in other generations and previous ages was not made known or revealed to the sons of men, as it has now been divinely revealed and made manifest to His holy apostles [who were commissioned and sent by Jesus Christ, bearing His authority] and His prophets by the Spirit;
6. That the Gentiles should be joint heirs, conjointly receiving of His inheritance; members of a joint body, which is His Church; and joint partakers, sharing His promise [of eternal life] through the good news of the gospel;
7. Of which I became a servant and minister according to the gratuitous gift of grace, the gracious calling of God, which was given to me according to the inner workings of His dynamic, spiritual power.
8. Yes, to me, the lowest of the least of all the saints, was this grace given, in order that the good news of the gospel might be preached and announced among the nations; even the unsearchable and unfathomable [the inconceivable and incomprehensible] wealth and luxuriant riches of Christ;
9. To enlighten and spiritually illuminate all nations by making clear what is the fellowship and participation, that close relationship with God, as revealed in the secret plan, which from the beginning of the world has been hidden [concealed and withheld from sight or knowledge] in God, who created and brought into existence everything by and through Jesus Christ;
10. So that it might now be made known through the church to the principalities and rulers, even the authorities who are exercising power in the heavenly realm [yes, even the angels], what is the infinite and supreme wisdom of God;
11. According to the eternal purpose, His purpose throughout the ages, which He proposed and planned [specifically worked out beforehand] in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Master;
12. In Whom we have boldness and confidence, even direct access to God [being admitted into the very presence of God the Father through prayer] in complete assurance and absolute trust by His faith [Christ's own faith implanted within our hearts and minds].
13. On account of this, I am imploring and beseeching you not to lose heart or weaken in confidence or faith, neither be discouraged or disillusioned at my trials and tribulations for

you, which are for your own glory in God's eternal plan.
14. Now it is for this cause and reason that I bow my knees in worshipful adoration and humble submission to the Father of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ,
15. From Whom the entire family of God, the angels in heaven and the saints on earth, is named,
16. That He may grant [graciously bestow and gratuitously endow] you, according to the luxuriant, abundant riches of His own magnificent splendor and glory, to be mightily strengthened and energized with dynamic power through His Holy Spirit in the inner man;
17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts and minds through faith and trusting belief, and that you may be constantly rooted and firmly planted [that is, stabilized, grounded and established] in love [godly, divine love],
18. So that you may be spiritually capable of understanding and able to fully comprehend with every one of the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height [of God's eternal plan and purpose];
19. And to know and understand the divine, godly love of Christ, which surpasses and exceeds all human knowledge and understanding; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God [with His Holy Spirit satiating every fiber of your being, so that in the resurrection at the return of Christ, you may see Him as He is, and be like Him, a son of God, composed of spirit as God is composed of spirit].
20. Now to Him who has the limitless and unending ability, which transcends all things, to do exceeding abundantly above everything that we can ask or think, according to the dynamic spiritual power that is working within us,
21. TO HIM, GOD THE FATHER, BE THE MAGNIFICENT SPLENDOR, HONOR AND GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY JESUS CHRIST THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS, EXPANDING INTO THE AGES OF ETERNITY. AMEN.

Before writing this inspiring and revealing passage, Paul wrote a prayer of enlightenment for the Christians at Ephesus. The author has translated Paul's prayer in the same manner as the above passage. May God the Father and Jesus Christ grant the fulfilling of this prayer in your life!

EPHESIANS 1:16-23

16. I do not cease giving thanks for you, continually making mention of you in my prayers;
17. That the God of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, the Father, Who radiates magnificent splendor and glory, may give you the spirit of divine wisdom and spiritual insight to reveal the knowledge and understanding of Him [God the Father];

> 18. So that the understanding of your minds may be continually enlightened [spiritually illuminated], and you may know and comprehend what is the hope of His calling, and the luxuriant riches [yes, even the opulent abundance] of His divine, magnificent splendor, and the glory of His inheritance in the saints;
> 19. And that you may know and comprehend the surpassing greatness and infinite magnitude of His power toward us who are believing, according to the inner working of the dynamic power and spiritual might of His strength,
> 20. Which He performed and worked in Christ, having resurrected Him from among the dead; and He set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
> 21. High above every principality and ruler, authority and power, lordship and dominion, and every name and title that can be named, not only in this present age, but also in the age that is coming.
> 22. And He, God the Father, has put all things [even the vastness of the universe] under His feet [giving Him the right of rulership and dominion], and has appointed Him to be the Head over all things in the Church,
> 23. Which is His body, the fullness of Him Who is fulfilling all things in every way.

The author's personal hope and prayer is that the knowledge and understanding of the true Christian Passover may be a new beginning for you, and that you may be in true covenant with God the Father and Jesus Christ—now and for all eternity.

Appendices

A-W

By Carl Franklin

Appendix A
Genesis 1:3-5

Genesis 1 describes the re-creation of the earth after Lucifer's rebellion and warfare: "In *the* beginning God [אֱלֹהִים *elõh-heem'* [430]] created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was [had become] without form and void [desolate and waste], and **darkness** [covering the entire earth] *was* upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw the light that *it was* good; and God divided between the light and the darkness" (Gen. 1: 1-4).

The Scriptural account makes it clear that God was looking down upon the earth at the boundary line of light and darkness. From a specific point above the face of the earth, God "... saw the light [that now shone upon the portion of the earth facing the sun], that *it was* good; and God divided between the light [shining upon half the earth] and the darkness [that covered the other half]. And God called the light day [יוֹם *yohm* [3117]], and He called the darkness night [Hebrew לָיִל *lah'-yil* [3915]]. And the evening [עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]] and the morning [בֹּקֶר *bõh'-ker* [1242]] were day one" (Gen. 1:4).

God Himself defined the lighted surface of the earth as day and the darkened surface as night. The word *lah'-yil*, which literally means "a twisting away from light," reveals that God created the cycle of day and night by setting the earth in rotation. As the earth began turning, the sun began to rise on one side of its surface while at the same time the sun was setting on the opposite side. Thus God instantaneously created both day and night. It is by the perpetual turning of the earth on its axis that the cycle of day and night was begun and has continued for thousands of years.

When God set the earth in rotation, He did not choose to begin marking time with the rising of the sun at the first dawn. Rather, He chose to begin counting from the first sunset, so that the evening of the day preceded the morning: "And the evening [עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153], sunset] and the morning [בֹּקֶר *bõh'-ker* [1242], sunrise] were day one" (Gen. 1:5).

That the first day began with the setting of the sun is confirmed by an analysis of this verse in the Hebrew text. As Owens shows, the Hebrew verb that is translated "were" in Genesis 1:5 is a *Qal* verb in the imperfective form (*Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, vol. 1). The imperfective form reveals "an aspect (*Aspeki*) in which a situation is understood as ongoing, whatever its temporal relation to the time of speaking (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 691).

Waltke continues with a quote from Comrie explaining the significance of the imperfective: "Another way of explaining the difference between perfective and imperfective meaning is to say that the perfective [completed time] looks at the situation from outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation, whereas **the imperfective looks at the situation from inside, and as such *is crucially concerned with the internal structure* of the situation**, since it can look backwards towards the start of the situation, and look forwards to the end of the situation, and indeed is equally appropriate if the situation is one that lasts through all time, without any beginning and without any end" (Ibid., p. 476, emphasis added).

The Hebrew imperfective is used in Genesis 1:5 to reveal the internal structure of a twenty-four hour day. This verse identifies four specific parts in the day: "Day" (*yohm*), "Night" (*lah'-yil*), "evening" (*geh'rev*), and "morning" (*boh'-ker*). Is there any indication in the Hebrew text as to the order of these four constituent units? Yes, there is. The use of the consecutive *waw*, translated "and," not only defines the limits of each day, but also reveals the sequence of time elements within each day: "**And** the evening and the morning were day one." The divine pattern for every day of every week is: sunset, darkness, sunrise, and daylight.

Verse 5 of Genesis 1 states: "And God called the light day, and He called the darkness night." Some have interpreted the fact that "day" is listed first as evidence that day precedes night. However, the structure of the Hebrew text shows that the action of naming the night was completed before God named the day. The Hebrew verb that is translated "called" is imperfective in the first clause (showing ongoing action) but is perfective (showing completed action) in the second clause. The use of the perfective form in the second clause confirms that the night had already been named when God named the day.

God called the light "day" (*yohm*); He did not call the light "morning" (*boh'ker*). God called the darkness "night" (*lay'-yil*); He did not call the darkness "evening" (*geh'rev*). Yet many believe that "morning" (*boh'-ker*) is naming the daylight portion of the day, and "evening" (*geh'rev*) is naming the darkness of night.

The King James translation of verse 5 seems to justify the claim that "evening" (*geh'rev*) is synonymous with "night", and "morning" (*boh'-ker*) is synonymous with "day" (*yohm*). In this translation, the verb "were" is renaming "evening" and "morning" as the first day, thus making it appear that evening/night and morning/day are synonymous terms. But this is not the meaning of the Hebrew text. Notice Owens' literal translation of the Hebrew text:

"called
God
the light
Day
and the darkness
He called
night
and there was [הָיָה *hãy-yãh'* [1961]] evening
and there was [הָיָה *hãy-yãh'* [1961]] morning
day
one" (*Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, vol. 1).

The English verb "was" is translated from the Hebrew *hãy-yãh'* [1961]. *Hãy-yãh'* is a *Qal* stem in the imperfective form and is used here in a *consecution* of tenses; i.e., leading clauses are prefaced with a consecutive *waw*.

In its context in Genesis 1:5, *hãy-yãh'* [1961] has the fundamental meaning "*to come into being, become*" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*). *Hãy-yãh'* [1961] is used twice in this verse, with the nouns "evening" (עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]) and "morning" (בֹּקֶר *bõh'-ker* [1242]). *Hãy-yãh'* [1961] represents these two subjects as the agents of the action by answering the questions, "What is happening to the evening?" and, "What is happening to the morning?" *Hãy-yãh'* answers these questions by responding, "The evening is coming into being," and, "The morning is coming into being."

The fact that *hãy-yãh'* [1961] is a *Qal* stem in the imperfective form, and that it is used in a consecution of similar tenses, shows that it is describing a sequence of events. Thus Owens translates this verse:

"**and there was** [*hãy-yãh'* [1961]] **evening** [*geh'rev* [6153]]
and there was [hãy-yãh' [1961]] **morning** [*bõh'-ker* [1242]]."

Fox's translation shows the precise meaning of *geh'rev* and *bõh'-ker*:

"**There was setting**,
there was dawning" (*The Schocken Bible*).

Fox adds the following footnote:

"setting...dawning:

"The Heb. terms *erev* and *boker* are rather more specific than the usual 'evening' and 'morning.' "Elsewhere I have used 'sunset' and 'daybreak'; the latter would have clashed with 'day' in these lines."

When we understand the true meaning of Genesis 1:5 as revealed in the Hebrew text, it is clear that the terms "evening" and "morning" are not

renaming "night" and "day." These terms are not synonymous but are identifying four distinct units of time in the daily cycle that God set in motion at the Creation: evening-night-morning-day, or, more specifically, sunset-darkness-sunrise-daylight.

Appendix B
Genesis 2:2

Genesis 2:2 states, "And by *the beginning of* the seventh day God finished His work which He had made. And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made."

The first part of this verse makes it appear that God did not end His work until the seventh day had begun. However, this translation is not based on the authentic wording of the Hebrew text. The evidence shows that the ordinal number that is used in the first part of this verse was altered by tampering with the text. The verse originally stated that God ended His work on the sixth day. George Ricker Berry footnotes this fact and correctly translates this passage: "And **on the sixth day God ended his work** which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (*A Hebrew/English Interlinear of Genesis and Exodus*).

Appendix C
Genesis 8:11

"And the dove came to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off. So Noah knew that the waters had gone down from off the face of the earth."

Some claim that the phrase "in the evening" is referring to the afternoon hours of the day. However, the Hebrew text does not support this interpretation. The phrase "in the evening" is composed of three Hebrew words: the preposition לְ *lamed*, the noun עֵהֶח *gehth* [6256], and the noun עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153] (*erev*).

Lamed is a preposition that is used thousands of times in the Hebrew text. Its basic senses are spatial. Waltke points to its basic meaning by writing, "The preposition may mark location in or at a point.... With verbs of motion לְ [*lamed*] marks the object of the motion toward (allative...) and of motion to (terminative...). The temporal uses of לְ include a sense like the simple locational (*in*, *at*, or *during* a period of time...) and a sense like the terminative (*to*, *by*, *until*, or *after* a period of time...)" (*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 205-206).

The preposition *lamed* is used in a temporal sense in Genesis 8:11 to mark a location in time, and is best rendered "at" in this verse. *Lamed* is used

in construct with the Hebrew noun *gehth* [6256], which means "time." In Genesis 8:11, *gehth* should be rendered "the time of," as it is in Genesis 24:11. The Hebrew noun *geh'rev* [6153] (*erev*) means "sunset," and is defined accordingly by Brown, Driver and Briggs, who render the phrase in Genesis 8:11 "**at** [לְ *lamed*] **the time of** [עֵת *gehth* [6256]] **sunset** [עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]]" (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 787, emphasis added).

The phrase "in the evening" (Hebrew *lamed gehth geh'rev*) in Genesis 8:11 is correctly interpreted as the end of the day at sunset. Thus this verse offers no support for the claim that the Hebrew word *geh'rev* (*erev*) refers to the afternoon of the day.

Appendix D
Exodus 12:6

"And you shall keep it up until [עַד *gad* [5704]j the *beginning* of the fourteenth day of the same month. And [Hebrew *waw]* the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the two evenings [בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]]

The actual meaning of the Hebrew *waw* in this context is equivalent to our English "when," as Owens has correctly translated it in his *Analytical Key to the Old Testament.* The Hebrew text views the two clauses joined by *waw* ("ye shall keep it..." and "the whole assembly...shall kill it...") as a coordinated unit, presenting two aspects of the sacrifice as simultaneous action—i.e., the lamb is to be kept until the fourteenth of Nisan and is to be slain at that time.

This timing is indisputable when we understand the use of the *Qal* verb in the Hebrew text. The *Qal* answers the question implicit to this narrative: "When is Israel to kill the lamb?" The answer is: "They are to keep it up **until** the fourteenth, **when** *(waw)* they are to kill it." The structure of the Hebrew text shows that these two aspects of the Passover are one and the same.

The key to understanding the commanded time for slaying the lambs is the word "**until**." The word "until" is translated from the Hebrew preposition *gad* [5704]. Like other Hebrew prepositions, *gad* has both spatial (location) and temporal (time) sense. "The basic sense of the preposition *[gad]* is allative (movement toward) - terminative (movement up to)" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 215).

The use of the preposition *gad* expresses **movement toward** Nisan 14. However, this movement does not extend into the fourteenth day, as the movement is **terminated** when Nisan 14 begins: "...until [עַד *gad* [5704], "**up to**"] the fourteenth day." To place *bēhn hã arbayim* in the afternoon of the

day forces an extension of eighteen hours (noon reckoning) to twenty-one hours (3 PM reckoning) into Nisan 14. This definition of *bēhn hã arbayim* violates the basic sense of *gad* and ignores the rules of Hebrew syntax.

The temporal sense of *gad* marks time up to the beginning of Nisan 14 at sunset, at which time the event governed by the verb must immediately take place. In this context, the event which was to take place at the beginning of Nisan 14—immediately after sunset—was the killing of the lambs during *bēhn hã arbayim.* To place even one hour of time between the beginning of Nisan 14 and the killing of the lambs violates the temporal sense of *gad* as defined by Hebrew syntax.

The use of the preposition עַד *gad* [5704] in Exodus 12:6 is conclusive evidence that the killing of the lambs took place immediately after sunset at the beginning of the fourteenth day.

Appendix E
Exodus 12:11

"And this is the way you shall eat it; *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it **in trepidation** (*KJV*, haste) [בְּחִפָּזוֹן *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]]. It *is* the LORD'S Passover."

Some have misinterpreted the phrase "in haste" as indicating that the Passover was eaten on the same night as the Exodus. The Hebrew text does not support this interpretation of Exodus 12:11.

The word "haste" (Hebrew *'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]) is found only three times in the entirety of the Old Testament. In each case, it is used with the preposition בְּ *b* or בִּ *beer* (different pronunciations of the same preposition).

"...and ye shall eat it **in haste** [בְּחִפָּזוֹן *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]]: it is the LORD'S passover" (Ex. 12:11, *KJV*).

"…for you came forth out of the land of Egypt **in haste** [בְּחִפָּזוֹן *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]]" (Deut. 16:3).

"For you shall not go out **with haste** [בִּחִפָּזוֹן *beer ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]], nor go by flight..." (Isa. 52:12).

The preposition בְּ *b* or בִּ *beer* may be used in a spatial sense (location or movement), a temporal sense (actual time or simultaneous time), or a circumstantial sense (physical circumstances or mental circumstances). (See Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* pp. 196-197.)

In Isaiah 52:12, the preposition בְּ *beer* is used in a circumstantial sense. The circumstances: Israel is not to go out "**with haste** [בְּחִפָּזוֹן *beer 'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]]"; i.e., in a state of alarm. Israel will go out peacefully, as the holy arm of the Lord protects her. The meaning of hurried movement, or "flight," does not apply to *'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* in this verse, as that meaning is expressed in the word *m'noo-sãh':* "nor go by flight [מְנוּסָה *m'noo-sãh'* [4499]]." The word "nor" that precedes *m'noo-sãh'* shows that it does not share the same meaning as *'ghip-pãh-zõhn'.*

In his *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* Owens translates this verse as follows:

> "for not
> in haste
> you shall go out
> and in flight
> you shall not go
> for will go
> before you
> Yahweh
> and your rearguard
> The God of
> Israel" (vol. 4).

The preposition *b* is also used in a circumstantial sense in Deuteronomy 16:3. The circumstances: Israel came out of Egypt in a state of trepidation [בְּחִפָּזוֹן *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* [2649]). *B'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* is not used in this verse to express hurried movement, or "flight," but rather to convey the state of mind in which Israel left Egypt. Thus Fox translates this verse:

> "You are not to eat it with leaven;
> seven days you are to eat it with
> matzot, bread of affliction,
> **for with trepidation you went out**
> from the land of Egypt,
> in order that you may bear-in-mind
> the day of your going-out
> from the land of Egypt,
> all the days of your life" (*The Schocken Bible*).

This translation of *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* also applies to Exodus 12:11. In Exodus 12:11, the preposition בְּ *b* cannot be interpreted in a spatial sense, indicating location or movement, as the verb "eat" is not a verb of movement. Israel was not eating "on the run." Nor does *b* convey a temporal sense, indicating actual time *in, at* or *when.* It would be incorrect to translate the prepositional phrase *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* as *"in* a time of haste," or *"at* a time of haste," or *"when* a time of haste *came."*

As in other occurrences in the Old Testament, *b* is used in Exodus 12:11 in its circumstantial sense to indicate the state of mind of the children of Israel on that night of great danger: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I *am* the LORD" (Exodus 12:12).

God passed through Egypt on the Passover night, slaying all her firstborn. Hearing the screams and wails of the Egyptians all around them, the children of Israel ate the Passover in a mental state of dread and trepidation, as expressed by the circumstantial sense of *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'.* This fearful state of mind was a natural reaction to the death and terror that surrounded their houses during the Passover meal.

It is misleading to translate *b'ghip-pãh-zõhn'* as "in haste." The children of Israel did not eat the Passover "in haste" but in a state of **trepidation**. Although they were prepared for travel, with staff in hand and sandals on their feet, they did not leave their houses immediately after eating the Passover. God had forbidden them to leave their houses until the morning (Hebrew *boqer,* meaning "dawn"). They remained in their houses all night, fully clothed and ready to leave as soon as the sun had risen.

Appendix F
Exodus 12:18

"In the first *month,* on [בְּ *bãh]* the fourteenth day of the month at sunset (*KJV* even) [בָּעֶרֶב *bãh geh' rev* [6153]], you shall eat unleavened bread, until [עַד *gad* [5704]] the twenty-first day of the month at sunset (*KJV* even) [בָּעֶרֶב *bah geh 'rev* [6153]]."

The phrase "on the fourteenth day of the month at even" is designating the end of the 14th day at sunset *(bah geh'rev,* or *ba erev).* The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at sunset ending Nisan 14 and continues until sunset ending the 21st day of the month.

It is erroneous to equate the phrase "ON the fourteenth day of the month at even" in this verse with the command in Exodus 12:6 to keep the Passover lamb "UNTIL the fourteenth day" and slay it "in the evening." The words "until" and "on" are translated from two different Hebrew prepositions and do not have the same meaning at all. In addition, the words "in the evening" in Exodus 12:6 are translated from בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn hã arbayim,* whereas in Exodus 12:18 the words "at even" are translated from בָּעֶרֶב *bah geh'rev,* or *ba erev.* Although *arbayim* is a form of the noun *erev,* and is accordingly listed under the same reference number, the two phrases are not synonymous. *Bah geh'rev,* or *ba erev,* is properly rendered "at sunset," whereas *behn ha arbayim* is literally translated "between the two evenings,"

or "between the setting-times," and denotes the time between sunset and dark. (See Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.)*

The command in Exodus 12:6 specifies that the Passover lamb be kept "UNTIL the fourteenth day," designating the beginning of the 14th day. On the other hand, the command in Exodus 12:18 specifies that unleavened bread be eaten "ON the fourteenth day of the month **at sunset** (*KJV* even)," designating the beginning of the 15th day. The only parallel that exists in these two verses is in the second command in Exodus 12:18, which specifies that unleavened bread be eaten "UNTIL the twenty-first day of the month **at sunset** (*KJV* even)." As in Exodus 12:6. the word "until" is translated from the Hebrew preposition *gad,* which denotes movement toward a specific point in time, and only up to that point (Waltke, p. *215).* "Until" in Exodus 12:6 does not extend past the beginning of Nisan 14, nor does "until" in Exodus 12:18 extend past the beginning of Nisan 22.

Appendix G
Exodus 16:1-2

"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin, which *is* between Elim and Sinai. And on the fifteenth day of the second month *after* their departing out of the land of Egypt, then the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness."

This translation makes it appear that Israel arrived at the wilderness of Sin while the 15th day was in progress. The Hebrew text, however, does not support the assertion that Israel traveled on the 15th day. The presence of a major logical pause between the verb "came" and the words "on the fifteenth day" verifies this fact. This logical pause is denoted by the use of the *atnah,* which resembles an upside-down "v," under the Hebrew word for "Sinai" (See *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia).*

The *atnah* and other accents are essential to understanding the thoughts that are being conveyed in the Hebrew text. These accent marks are all part of a system that "**punctuates the text** and is therefore a very important feature in its syntactic analysis.... This feature of Hebrew grammar is so important for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words" (Waltke, *An introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 29).

Waltke describes the use of the *atnah* and other accents to express divisions of thought in the Hebrew text: "Accents in the MT [Masoretic Text] are of two kinds: disjunctives and conjunctives. Disjunctive accents, euphemistically dubbed 'lords' by earlier scholars, mark the length of pauses from full stop [complete break in logical thought] to various shades

of shorter pauses [partial breaks in logical thought]; conjunctives, dubbed 'servants,' control the text up to the disjunctive. According to W. Wickes's comprehensive study of the accents, the disjunctives mark a continuous 'dichotomy' of the verse, that is, **they divide larger units [of thought], beginning with the verse itself** (marked off by *silluq* closing the verse), into successively smaller half-units on a syntactic (or logico-syntactic) basis. A unit ending with a disjunctive of one grade is divided into halves, and its halves in turn are divided into smaller units by other disjunctive signs until the whole verse is divided into single words, or groups of words joined by conjunctives. Israel Yeivin groups the major disjunctive accents as follows: '**Generally *atnah* divides the verse,** *zaqef* the verse halves, *pashta* or *revia* the unit ending with *zaqef,* and so on' " (Ibid., emphasis added).

In translating Exodus 16:1, Owens indicates the presence of the *atnah* by parsing the Hebrew word for Sinai as "pr.n.paus." (proper noun pausal). The division of thought that is expressed by the *atnah* is illustrated in his translation below:

"They set out
from Elim
and came
all the congregation of
the people of Israel
to the wilderness of
Sin
which is
between Elim
and Sinai

(logical pause)

on the five
ten
day
of the month
second
after they had departed
from the land of Egypt

and murmured
the whole congregation of
the people of Israel
against Moses
and Aaron
in the wilderness"
(Analytical Key to the Old Testament, vol. 1).

The logical pause in Exodus 16:1 divides the thoughts that follow from the preceding thoughts that are expressed in the verse. The Septuagint, which follows the logical markings of the text very closely, translates this passage as follows: "And they departed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai; **and on the fifteenth day, in the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt,[2] a11 the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron."**

The presence of the logical pause in Exodus 16:1 shows that Israel had come to the wilderness of Sin and made camp by the beginning of the fifteenth day. When the fifteenth day arrived, Israel complained to Moses that God had brought them to the desert to die. Thus there is no basis for the claim that Israel was traveling on the l5th day.

Appendix H
Exodus 16:6-7

"And Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At sunset (*KJV* even) עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]], then you shall know that the LORD has brought you out from the land of Egypt. And at sunrise, you shall see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your murmurings against the LORD: And what *are* we that you murmur against us?"

Some claim that because the preposition *ba* is not used in Exodus 16:6, *geh'rev (erev)* does not refer to sunset. But although there is no preposition in the Hebrew text, the translation "at even" is justified by the fact that *geh'rev* is used as an adverbial expression of time in the accusative case (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament).*

Waltke verifies that *geh'rev (erev)* in Exodus 16:6 is an adverbial expression of time. Waltke translates this passage "In the evening you *will know* ... and in the morning you *will see...." (An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. *538).*

Owens parses Exodus 16:6 as follows:

"so **...** said
Moses
and Aaron
to all
the people of
Israel
At evening
you shall know
that it was Yahweh

> who brought you
> out of the land of
> Egypt. . ." *(Analytical Key to the Old Testament,*
> vol. 1, emphasis added).

Fox translates Exodus 16:6-7 as follows: "Moshe and Aharon said to all the Children of Israel: **At sunset** you will know that it is YHWH who brought you out of the land of Egypt; at daybreak you will see the Glory of YHWH: when he hearkens to your grumblings against YHWH—what are we, that you grumble against us?" (*The Schocken Bible*.)

Fox's translation expresses the precise meaning of *geh'rev* in Exodus 16:6, confirming that this Hebrew word is designating the time of sunset.

Appendix I
Leviticus 23:32

"It *shall be* to you a Sabbath of rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. In the ninth *day* of the month at sunset, בָּעֶרֶב *bãh geh'rev* [6153]], from sunset to sunset, you shall keep your Sabbath."

Some claim that the phrase "**in** the ninth *day* of the month (KJV **at even**)" places *bãh geh'rev,* or *ba erev,* during the ninth day, rather than at the end of the day. Based on this interpretation, they teach that the observance of all feast days and weekly Sabbaths should begin at noon or some other hour during the day, rather than at sunset. According to this line of reasoning, the observance of the Passover would begin at noon or shortly after, thus placing *bēhn hã arbayim* in the afternoon of the day.

This faulty interpretation of Leviticus 23:32 is based entirely on the meaning of the word "in," which is translated from the Hebrew preposition ב *b.* But as Waltke shows, this Hebrew preposition does not necessarily have the same meaning as the English word that was used to translate it: "One must not assume that a Hebrew speaker would have categorized its [a Hebrew preposition's] meanings according to English equivalents" (*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 192).

It is a mistake to assume that the Hebrew preposition *b* is equivalent to the English preposition "in." Those who make this mistake do not realize that the preposition *b* is also translated "at" in Leviticus 23:32: "... **in** [בְּ *b*] the ninth *day* of the month **at** [בָּ *bãh,* variant pronunciation of *b*] even…" It is proper to translate *h* into both of these English prepositions: "Used *temporally, b* may mark an actual time **in**, **at**, or **when**" (Waltke, p. 196). The Hebrew preposition *b* may also be translated "on," as in Exodus 12:15 and 16:1.

Because the Hebrew preposition *b* is much broader in meaning than the English preposition "in," this English word cannot be used as a standard for interpreting the command in Leviticus 23:32. The specific meaning of *b* in this command cannot be determined by relying on a dictionary definition of "in," nor can it be established by a concordance definition of *b.* As with all Hebrew prepositions, *b* must be interpreted by the context in which it is used. Waltke warns against using Hebrew prepositions as philological "wild cards;" i.e., assigning definitions to them without regard to the context or the rules of Hebrew syntax (Ibid., p. 190).

Those who attach a specific meaning to the preposition *b* and use it to interpret the Hebrew text are reasoning backwards. Instead of interpreting the preposition by the context, they are interpreting the context by the preposition. They have used a faulty definition of the preposition *b* to interpret the meaning of the command in Leviticus 23:32, with complete disregard for the meaning of the Hebrew noun *geh'rev,* or *erev.* In using the preposition *b* to determine the meaning of this Hebrew noun, they have violated the rules of Hebrew syntax. As Waltke shows, the purpose of prepositions is not to define nouns but to show their relationship to verbs. The use of a preposition clarifies the meaning of the text by making the relationship between the verb and the noun being modified (object of the preposition) more precise (Ibid., p. 188).

The use of the preposition *b* in Leviticus 23:32 clarifies the relationship between the verb "celebrate" and the nouns "day" and "even." This double use of the preposition *b* pinpoints the exact time to begin the observance: "... **in** [*b*] the ninth day…at [*b*] even." The following translation of Leviticus 23:32 is parsed by Owens in his *Analytical Key to the Old Testament:*

> "a sabbath of solemn rest
> it shall be to you
> and you shall afflict
> yourselves
> ***on*** [בְּ *b] the ninth (day)* of the month
> **beginning at** [בָּ *bãh,* variant pronouniation of
> *b*] evening from evening to evening
> shall you keep
> your sabbath" (vol. 1).

Note that the first use of *b* ("**on**") limits the time to a twenty-four hour period (the ninth day), and the second use of *b* specifies the exact time during that twenty-four hour period: "**beginning at evening**." The word "evening" *(geh'rev,* or *erev)* denotes the time of sunset, and is defined accordingly by noted authorities in Biblical Hebrew (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament).*

Fox's translation of Leviticus 23:32 clearly expresses the time that is designated in the Hebrew text: "It is Sabbath, a Sabbath-ceasing for you, you are to afflict yourselves; on the ninth (day) after the New-Moon, at sunset, from sunset to sunset, you are to make-a-ceasing of your ceasing" (*The Schocken Bible*).

According to the Hebrew text, the observance of the Day of Atonement begins when the 9th of Tishri ends at sunset, and continues until the next sunset, which ends the 10th of Tishri. That is the true interpretation of the command in Leviticus 23:32.

Appendix J
Numbers 9:9-11

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If any man of you or of your generations shall be unclean because of a dead body, or in a journey afar off, he shall still keep the Passover to the LORD. They shall keep it the fourteenth day of the second month between the two evenings (KJV at even) [בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]], eating it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*.

Because the Hebrew phrase *bēhn hã arbayim* literally means "between the two evenings," some argue that *bēhn hã arbayim* extends for a full twenty-four hours, from one evening to the next evening. According to this interpretation, *bēhn hã arhayim* includes the afternoon of the l4th.

This faulty definition of *bēhn hã arbayim* is based on a literal interpretation of the Hebrew word *arbayim* עַרְבָּיִם, which is the plural form of *erev,* or *ereb,* meaning "sunset." Those who teach this doctrine mistakenly assert that the two evenings represented by *arbayim* are two literal sunsets beginning and ending the day. They err because they are assuming that the phrase *bēhn hã arbayim* follows the rules for Hebrew duals.

While it is true that *bēhn hã arbayim* is dual in its form, it does not conform to the rules of Hebrew duals. In the Hebrew language, the rules for interpreting duals apply only to matching pairs of human and animal parts—i.e., two ears, two eyes, two feet, two hands—or to clothing or other items that are composed of pairs or matching parts, such as a pair of sandals, a pair of trousers, or a pair of scissors. These Hebrew duals are known as "natural pairs" (Waltke, p. 117). Another use of the Hebrew dual is for countable units of time or measurement, such as two days, two years, two cubits, two hundred (Ibid., p. 118).

The phrase *bēhn hã arbayim* does not fall under either of these types of Hebrew duals. It is neither a dual of natural pairs nor a countable unit of time. To the contrary, it is referred to as a "fanciful dual" because it has the

form of the Hebrew dual but does not function as a natural or countable dual (Ibid.).

Because *bēhn hã arbayim* is a "fanciful dual," its meaning cannot be determined simply by breaking it down into its components, as some have attempted to do. **As a "fanciful dual," *bēhn hã arbayim* has meaning beyond the literal sense of its components**. (In English, it would be termed an "idiomatic expression.") Furthermore, its components themselves may vary in meaning, depending on their usage in the Hebrew text.

To illustrate this point, let us examine the use of the preposition *bēhn* in Nehemiah 5:18: "Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in [בֵּין *bēhn* [996]] ten days store of all sorts of wine...." Note that the phrase "once in ten days" contains the preposition *bēhn.* While *bēhn* is generally translated "between," it is here translated "in" to show that an event occurred every ten days, or *"during the interval* often days" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 107).

The use of *bēhn* in Nehemiah 5:18 illustrates the diversity in the meaning of this word. It cannot be defined independently of the context in which it is used. Likewise, the expression *bēhn hã arbayim* can only be interpreted by the context in which it is used.

The Hebrew word for **noon**, עָהֳרָיִם *tzoh'harim* [6672], is another "fanciful dual." *Tzoh'harini* is literally defined as the "time of the double shadow" (Waltke, p. 118). This Hebrew word is describing the time period when the shortening shadows cast by the rising sun are offset by lengthening shadows cast back toward the east as the sun approaches its apex and continues westward. If *tzoh'harim* had been literally translated into English as the "time of the double shadow," we would be in doubt as to its actual meaning as a measure of time. Similarly, to literally translate *bēhn hã arbayim* as "between the two evenings" leaves room for much conjecture. The actual meaning of both of these Hebrew expressions must be defined by the context in which they are used.

The Hebrew text gives us specific guidelines for interpreting the meaning of *bēhn hã arbayim.* Its usage in Exodus 12:6 reveals that *bēhn hã arbayim* begins immediately after sunset at the entering of the day. The preposition עַד *gad* [5704] allows no room for any other interpretation. When we understand the structure of the Hebrew text, it is undeniably evident that the arrival of Nisan 14 at sunset marks the beginning of *bēhn hã arbayim.*

The end of *bēhn hã arbayim* is also defined by its usage in the Hebrew text and on the established rules of the ancient language. Authorities in early Hebrew culture, Hebrew syntax and the etymology of Hebrew words, as well as other Semitic languages of ancient times, define *bēhn hã arbayim* as "time between day and night" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,*

p. 118). This description limits *bēhn hã arbayim* to the time of twilight, which ends with the coming of darkness.

The literal meaning of *bēhn hã arbayim* is "time between the two enterings." Waltke describes these two "enterings" as entering sunset and entering dark (Ibid., p. 200). This definition of the two "evenings" *(arbayim)* is confirmed by the command for slaying the lambs (Ex. 12:6), which designates the arrival of the 14th as the beginning of *bēhn hã arbayim.* The whole congregation of Israel was commanded to slay the lambs at this time—immediately after sunset—not any time of their choosing during the next twenty-four hours.

There is no basis in the Hebrew text for the claim that *bēhn hã arbayim* extends through the entire day, from sunset to sunset. The ordinances of God required not only the killing of the lambs but the entire Passover observance to be completed before the night of Nisan 14 ended (Ex. 12:6, 8, 10, 12-13). And if, as some erroneously claim, *bēhn hã arbayim* did not end until the coming of dawn, this reasoning would still not allow an extension of *bēhn hã arbayim* into the afternoon.

Appendix K
Numbers 9:11

"They shall keep [עָשָׂה *gãh-sãh'* [6213]] it the fourteenth day of the second month between the two evenings (*KJV,* at even) [בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]], eating [אָכַל *ãh-chãl'* [398]] it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs."*

Some have interpreted the Passover commands in this verse as evidence that the lambs were to be both killed and eaten during *bēhn hã arbayim.* Because it was not possible to complete the roasting and eating of the Passover lambs during the brief period of twilight, they claim that *bēhn hã arbayim* extends into the dark hours after twilight, and may include the entire night.

Is there any Scriptural basis for this claim? A literal translation of the Passover instructions in Numbers 9:11 will help to clarify the meaning of the Hebrew text:

> "In the second month
> on the fourteenth day
> between the evenings *[bēhn hã arbayim]*
> they shall keep it
> with unleavened bread
> and bitter herbs
> they shall eat it."

In this literal translation of Numbers 9:11, there is no "and" linking the two commands because there is no *waw* in the Hebrew text. (See Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1.) The fact that no conjunction is used in the Hebrew text indicates that there is no connection between the first command and the second command.

The separate nature of the two commands is substantiated not only by the absence of the *waw* but also by the verb form that is used in the Hebrew text. The English expression "they shall keep it" is translated from two words, the masculine plural verb עָשׂוּ *gah-sah'* [6213] translated "they shall keep," and the direct object אֹתוֹ *ãh-ghaz'* [270], translated "it." *Gãh-sãh'* is a *Qal* verb stem in the imperfective form. Waltke quotes Comrie's description of the Hebrew imperfective: "…the imperfective looks at the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation…" (*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 476). The imperfective form views the Passover from the inside, giving us a step-by-step view of its events. The sacrificing of the lambs is one event, and the eating of the Passover meal is another event. These two events are separate and distinct.

The Hebrew text does not link the eating of the Passover with *bēhn hã arbayim.* In the Masoretic text of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia,* the command to eat the Passover is designated as a separate command by the use of the *atnah,* a mark that looks like an upside-down "v." The *atnah* is one of many accent marks that are used to logically divide the thoughts that are being expressed in the Hebrew text: "Accents in the MT [Masoretic Text] are of two kinds: disjunctives and conjunctives. Disjunctive accents, euphemistically dubbed 'lords' by earlier scholars, mark the length of pauses from full stop [complete break in logical thought] to various shades of shorter pauses [partial breaks in logical thought]; conjunctives, dubbed 'servants,' control the text up to the disjunctive. According to W. Wickes's comprehensive study of the accents, the disjunctives mark a continuous 'dichotomy' of the verse, that is, **they divide larger units [of thought], beginning with the verse itself** (marked off by *silluq* closing the verse), into successively smaller half-units on a syntactic (or logico-syntactic) basis. A unit ending with a disjunctive of one grade is divided into halves, and its halves in turn are divided into smaller units by other disjunctive signs until the whole verse is divided into single words, or groups of words joined by conjunctives. Israel Yeivin groups the major disjunctive accents as follows: '**Generally *atnah* divides the verse**, *zaqef* the verse halves, *pashla* or *revia* the unit ending with *zaqef* and so on'" (Waltke, p. 29, emphasis added).

The *atnah* and other accents are essential to understanding the thoughts that are being conveyed in the Hebrew text. These accent marks are all part of a system that "...**punctuates the text** and is therefore a very important feature in its syntactic analysis.... This feature of Hebrew grammar is so important for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid

more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words" (Ibid.).

The purpose of the *atnah*, or *athnah*, is to indicate the end of one complete thought and the beginning of another. The presence of the *atnah* between the two Passover commands in Numbers 9: 11 is conclusive evidence of the separate nature of these commands. Below is a literal translation of Numbers 9:11 showing the division that is signified by the *atnah*:

"**...between the evenings** [בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]] **they shall prepare** [עָשָׂה *gãh-sãh'* [6213]] **it**

[*atnah*]

"**with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat** [אָכַל *ãh-chãl'* [398]] **it**."

The placement of the *atnah* between the two commands separates the eating of the Passover from the sacrificing of the lambs at *bēhn hã arbayim.* The only event linked to *bēhn hã arbayim* in the Hebrew text is the killing of the lambs. Fox's translation uses a semicolon to express this break in thought: "...in the second New-Moon, on the fourteenth day, **between the setting-times** [בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]], **he is to sacrifice** [Hebrew עָשָׂה *gãh-sãh'* [6213]] **it**; together with *matza* (and) bitter-herbs **they are to eat** [Hebrew אָכַל *ãh-chãl']* **it**" (*The Schocken Bible*).

The Hebrew text does not support the claim that the children of Israel were required to roast and eat the Passover lambs during *bēhn hã arbayim.* Thus the Passover commands in Numbers 9 in no way contradict the Scriptural definition of *bēhn hã arbayim* as a very short period of time bounded by sunset on one side and total darkness on the other. The definition of *bēhn hã arbayim* as the twilight period of the day is fully substantiated by the Hebrew text.

Appendix L
Numbers 28:4

"The one lamb you shall offer at sunrise (*KJV,* in the morning), and the other lamb you shall offer between the two evenings (*KJV,* at even) [בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]]

Many have assumed that this verse is listing the morning and evening sacrifices in the order in which they were to be offered each day. Based on this assumption, they conclude that the evening sacrifice—which was to be offered at *bēhn hã arbayim—had* to be offered before the day ended at sunset. This interpretation of Numbers 28:4 places *bēhn hã arbayim* in the afternoon of the day.

An analysis of Numbers 28:4 in the Hebrew text exposes the error in this interpretation. The structure of the Hebrew text reveals that the two sacrifices are not listed in the order in which they took place during each twenty-four hour day (from sunset to sunset). The Hebrew *waw* (translated "and") between the two sacrifices **does not express a consecutive order of events**. This fact is made clear by the rules that govern the use of the *waw* in the Hebrew text.

The Hebrew *waw* is classified according to its purpose and function in the Hebrew text. A *waw* which indicates **a temporal sequence of events** (based on time order) or a **non-temporal sequence** of events (based on logical order) is known as a **relative** or **consecutive *waw*.** A *waw* which indicates **linkage** between events is known as a **copulative *waw*.** This linkage (copulation) may express:

—two aspects of the same setting;

—contrast between two events in the same setting;

—simple coordination of two events in a setting; or,

—a **disjunction** of events (out of chronological order).

A *waw* that is used to indicate a disjunction of events is known as a **disjunctive *waw*.** We know that the *waw* used in Numbers 28:4 is disjunctive (that is, it does NOT indicate sequential order) because:

> The *waw* is prefixed to the word "other," which is a noun—not a verb. A *waw* that is prefixed to a non-verb is always **disjunctive**.
>
> The *waw* is **inter-clausal**—that is, it connects two clauses of equal rank. "Inter-clausal *waw* before a non-verb constituent has a **disjunctive** role" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 650, emphasis added).

When we understand the structure of the Hebrew text, there is no question that the "and" in Numbers 28:4 is a disjunctive *waw.* According to the rules of Hebrew grammar, because the *waw* ("and") in Numbers 28:4 is disjunctive, it signals that the evening sacrifice is being named **out of chronological order**. As a disjunctive *waw,* the "and" in Numbers 28:4 does not express the daily sequence of the morning and evening sacrifices. Although the morning sacrifice is named in the first clause, the disjunctive *waw'* that introduces the second clause shows that the evening sacrifice is being named out of chronological sequence. **All clauses that are introduced by a disjunctive *waw* are out of sequence**: "…the second clause may be in various relations, **all non-sequential**, with the first" (Ibid., emphasis added).

Based on the rules of Hebrew syntax, the second clause in Numbers 28:4, "...and the other lamb you shall offer between the two evenings *[bēhn hã arbayim],"* is NOT sequentially linked with the first clause, "The one lamb you shall offer at sunrise [Hebrew בֹּקֶר *böh'-ker* [1242]]." Thus this verse does not support the claim that *bēhn hã arbayim* occurs in the afternoon.

Appendix M
Numbers 33:3

"And they set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the *next* day (*KJV* morrow) after the Passover *day*, the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

Those who teach that the Passover lambs were eaten on the night of Nisan 15 claim that the word "morrow" in Numbers 33:3 means "morning," and that the Exodus did not begin until sunrise on Nisan 15. Is this a legitimate interpretation of Numbers 33:3? An examination of this verse in the Hebrew text will reveal the answer to this question.

The words "on the morrow after" are translated from the Hebrew phrase מִמָּחֳרַת *m moh-'ghorahth* [4283]. This phrase is composed of the preposition מִן *mn* (assimilated as *m)* and the noun *moh-'ghorahth.* The preposition *mn* is used in its temporal sense to express a specific period of time. Thus *mn* is correctly translated "on" in this phrase. (See Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 212). The noun *moh-'ghorahth* is defined as "the day following a *past* day" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 564). Thus Owens translates the phrase *m moh-'ghorahth* "on **the day** after the passover" *(Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1, emphasis added). This translation accurately conveys that "the morrow after the passover" commenced at sunset ending Nisan 14 and continued to the end of Nisan 15.

The phrase "the morrow after the passover" shows that all Passover events were completed before the beginning of this twenty-four hour day—"the fifteenth day." As Owens shows, the noun *moh-'ghorahth* ("the morrow after") is used in construct with *peh'sagh* ("passover"). The term "construct" denotes that the noun *moh-'ghorahth* is being modified by the noun *peh'sagh* [6453] (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 138). The phrase that is formed from these two nouns ("the morrow after the passover") is known as a "construct chain." Waltke defines a construct chain as "a phrase involving a construct *(regens)* term followed by a genitive or absolute *(rectum)* term, often of a possessed-possessor type, e.g., *bet hammelek* 'the kings' house' " (Ibid., p. 690). The term *regens* (ruler) refers to a modified element, and the term *rectum* (thing ruled) refers to the modifier (Ibid., p. 137).

The use of the genitive construct in Numbers 33:3 clearly identifies Nisan 15 as the day after the Passover. The structure of the Hebrew text thus separates the observance of the Passover from the events of Nisan 15. There is no Scriptural basis for the claim that the children of Israel ate the Passover on the night of Nisan 15. Those who place the eating of the Passover on the night of Nisan 15 and the departure from Rameses in the morning are contradicting the Scriptural facts. The record that God has preserved in the book of Exodus plainly states that the children of Israel left Egypt during the night: "It *is* a night to be much observed to the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:42). This record is confirmed in the book of Deuteronomy: "…For in the month of Abib, the LORD your God brought you forth out of Egypt **by night**" (Deut. 16:1).

It is an outright rejection of the Scriptural facts to claim that the Passover was eaten on the night of Nisan 15. As recorded in Numbers 33:3, the only event that took place on Nisan 15 was the departure of the children of Israel from Rameses.

Appendix N
Deuteronomy 16:6

"But at the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place His name in, there you shall sacrifice the Passover offering at sunset (*KJV* even), at the going *down* of the sun, at the time that you came out of Egypt" (Deut. 16:6).

Some view this verse as a command to sacrifice the Passover lambs on the afternoon of the l4th. They interpret the phrase "at the going *down* of the sun" as the declining of the sun from its high point at noon to its setting at the end of the day, which places the sacrifice in Deuteronomy 16:6 during the afternoon. However, the Hebrew text does not support this interpretation of the command in Deuteronomy 16:6.

An analysis of the Hebrew text will demonstrate that this command does not refer to the slaying of the Passover lambs in the afternoon of the 14th but to a subsequent sacrifice that was offered at the beginning of the l5th. The phrase "**at the going *down* of the sun**" in Deuteronomy 16:6 is translated from כְּבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ *kaph boh* [935] *ha sheh'mesh* [8121] The use of the preposition כ *kaph* rules out any possibility that this phrase is referring to the afternoon of Nisan 14.

Unlike other Hebrew prepositions that are commonly used in Scripture, *kaph* generally "...has no basic spatial [movement] or temporal [time] sense; it describes comparison and correspondence..." (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 202). However, *kaph* does convey a temporal (time) relationship when it is used in the infinitive construct (Ibid., p. 205). An analysis of the phrase "at the going *down* of the sun" shows that

kaph is used in the infinitive construct in Deuteronomy 16:6 (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1).

Because *kaph* is used in the infinitive construct in this verse, it functions in a temporal sense as a marker of time. Waltke describes the specific use of *kaph* in its temporal sense: "The *temporal* use of *k* [כ *kaph*] is related to its sense either as **a marker** of approximation ('about that time') or of **correspondence ('at the (same) time**')" (*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 205, emphasis added).

In Deuteronomy 16:6, *kaph* is clearly used in its temporal sense as a marker of correspondence: "**at** the going *down* of the sun." The phrase "at the going *down* of the sun" thus refers to a specific time—not to the declining of the sun through the entire afternoon. The use of the preposition *kaph* in the Hebrew text contradicts the claim that Deuteronomy 16:6 is describing an afternoon sacrifice of the Passover. Notice Fox's translation of this phrase in Deuteronomy 16:6: ". . .rather, in the place that YHWH your God chooses his name to dwell you are to slaughter the Passover-offering, at setting-time, **when the sun comes in**, at the appointed-time of your going-out from Egypt" (*The Schocken Bible*).

The temporal use of *kaph* in the infinitive construct expresses correspondence in time between the "Passover-offering" and the setting of the sun. A more precise translation would be "**at the same time as the going down of the sun**."

The phrase "at even" confirms that the command in Deuteronomy 16:6 is designating a sacrifice at sunset. This phrase is translated from the preposition בְּ *bãh* and the noun *geh'rev,* which specifically refers to sunset. In this usage, *bãh* expresses the meaning "at the time of."

The phrase בָּעֶרֶב *bãh geh'rev* [6153] ("at even") is governed by the verb זָבַח *zãh-vagh'* [2076] ("thou shalt sacrifice"). *Zãh-vagh'* is a *Qal* stem in the imperfective form. This verb answers the question implicit to this narrative: "When is all Israel to sacrifice this passover-offering?" *Zãh-vagh'* answers, "All Israel shall sacrifice the passover-offering **at sunset** (בָּעֶרֶב *bãh geh'rev* [6153]).."

Deuteronomy 16:6 uses an additional phrase to specify the time of this sacrifice: "at the time (*KJV* season) that you came out of Egypt." The phrase "at the season" is translated from the noun מוֹעֵד *mõh-gehd'* [4150] used in construct (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1). The fact that *mõh-gehd'* is used in "construct" shows that this Hebrew noun is being modified by a word, phrase or clause that follows (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 138-139). In this usage, the modifier is the clause "that you came forth," which is translated from the *Qal* verb יָצָא *yãh-tzãh'* [3318], used in the infinitive construct (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old*

Testament, vol. 1). The infinitive construct of the verb may be translated either as a subordinate clause ("that thou camest forth," *KJV*) or as a gerund ("of your going-out," *Schocken*).

The Hebrew word *mõh-gehd'*, which is translated "seasons" in the *King James Version*, does not refer to the seasons of the year but to the specific days that God appointed to be observed as His feast days. (See Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 417). Thus Fox translates this phrase "**at the appointed time** of your going-out from Egypt." This same Hebrew word is used in Leviticus 23:2, where it is translated "feasts."

The *mõh-gehd'* or feast of God that is described in Deuteronomy 16:6 is identified as the day of Israel's "going-out from Egypt." That day is clearly named in Numbers 33:3 as the 14th of Nisan, on this *mõh-gehd'*, Israel was commanded to offer a special sacrifice to God from either the flock or the herd to commemorate the beginning of the Exodus.

The use of *mõh-gehd'* in Deuteronomy 16:6 in construct with the clause "that you came out" and in conjunction with the phrase "at the going *down* of the sun" confirms that the Exodus from Egypt began at sunset. The Hebrew text reveals that Israel was on the march as soon as the sun went down, ending Nisan 14 and beginning Nisan 15. The children of Israel did not sacrifice the lambs on the afternoon of the 14th and eat the Passover meal at the beginning of the 15th as they were leaving Egypt. Thus Deuteronomy 16 offers no support for the belief in the afternoon sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

Appendix O
Joshua 5:10

"And the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept [עָשָׂה *gãh-sãh'* 6213] the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at evening [בָּעֶרֶב *bãh geh'rev* 6153] in the plains of Jericho."

Some claim that this verse is describing a Passover at the end of Nisan 14. However, the structure of the text does not support this interpretation of Joshua 5:10. An examination of the context reveals that this verse is in a series of waw-relative verses. Each of these verses is linked to the next by the Hebrew *waw,* which is translated into the English conjunction "and." The use of the relative *waw* at the beginning of each verse shows that the events in these verses are in sequential order. The consecutive chain of events begins with verse 8 of Joshua 5 and continues through verse 15 at the end of the chapter.

Waltke explains the use of relative *waw* to describe a sequence of events: "Situations described with *wayyqtl* [relative *waw*] are mostly temporally or logically succeeding. 'The most obvious and frequent relation is,' as S.R. Driver notes, 'that of simple **chronological succession**…but of this there is no need to give…examples, as they abound throughout the historical portions of the Old Testament.' *Wayyqtl* signifies **logical succession** where a logical entailment from (a) preceding situation(s)...is expressed" *(An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 547, emphasis added).

As Waltke shows, relative *waw* may be used to show either chronological or logical succession. In logical succession, relative *waw* connects two events that are related by circumstances. He gives several examples of logical succession:

"YHWH was with Joseph *and so* he *was* prosperous" (Gen. 39:2).

"Because you have rejected the word of YHWH, he *has rejected* you as king" (I Sam. 15:23).

"He did not kill me in the womb, *so that* my mother *would have become* my tomb (Jer. 20: 17)" (Ibid., p. 548).

We can easily see that the element of time is not part of these descriptions. There is no indication as to when these events occurred. Logically linked events do not express chronological sequence but, rather, show a cause-effect relationship between events.

Verses 13 through 15 of Joshua *5* relate events that are linked logically. Although an initial time element is expressed in Verse 13, the *waw*-relative clauses that follow are all in logical succession; that is, each action is based on the circumstances of the preceding action:

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was beside Jericho [a temporal event], he lifted up his eyes and looked. And, behold, there stood a Man in front of him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, '*Are* You for us or for our foes?' And He said, 'No, but I have come *as* the Commander of the army of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth. And he worshiped and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?' And the Commander of the LORD'S army said to Joshua, 'Take your shoes off your feet for the place on which you stand *is* holy.' And Joshua did so" (Josh. 5:13-15).

The logical succession in verses 13 through 15 of Joshua *5* differs greatly from the chronological succession that is expressed in verses 10 through 12:

"And the children of Israel camped in Gilgal and kept the Passover **on the fourteenth day of the month at evening** in the plains of Jericho.

And they ate of the old grain of the land **on the next day after the Passover**, unleavened cakes and roasted *new* grain in the same day. And the manna stopped **on the next day after they had eaten** the grain of the land..." (Josh. 5:10-12).

These verses are clearly describing a chronological sequence of events which took place during three consecutive days. The *waw* that introduces each verse shows that each event was completed before the next event took place.

Verse 10 describes the event that took place during Nisan 14:

"**And** the children of Israel camped in Gilgal and kept the Passover **on the fourteenth day of the month at evening** [a specific unit of time] in the plains of Jericho." Although the word "and" appears twice in the King James translation, the Hebrew *waw* is used only at the beginning of this verse. Owens parses Joshua 5:10 as follows:

> **"While** [*waw*]...were encamped
> the people of Israel
> in Gilgal
> they kept
> the passover
>
> **on the fourteenth**
> **day**
> **of the month**
> **at evening**
> in the plains of
> Jericho" *(Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1).

This translation accurately conveys the meaning of the Hebrew text, which shows that the children of Israel were already encamped at Gilgal when the 14th of Nisan began. The only event that took place on Nisan 14 was the observance of the Passover.

Verse 11 describes the next event, which took place on Nisan 15:

"**And** they ate of the old grain of the land **on the next day after the Passover** [a specific unit of time], unleavened cakes and roasted *new* grain in the same day."

Verse 12 describes the event that took place on the following day, Nisan 16:

"**And** the manna stopped **on the next day after they had eaten** [a specific unit of time] of the grain of the land...."

The events that are recorded in these verses took place during **separate and distinct units of time**; that is, three separate days. The relative *waw* that introduces the verses separates the unit of time (day) that is specified in each verse from the next unit of time (day). This use of the *waw* rules out any link between the events in the first unit of time (Nisan 14) and the events in the second unit of time (Nisan 15). The Hebrew text does not allow any overlapping of events from one day to the next.

The use of the relative *waw* in Joshua 5:10 places all the Passover events, including the eating of the Passover, "**on the fourteenth day of the month**." This fact is further verified by an analysis of the phrase "on the fourteenth" in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew phrase contains three words: the preposition בְּ *b,* the number four אַרְבַּע *ar-bag'* [702], and the number ten עָשָׂר *gãh-sãhr'* [6240]. In this phrase, *b* is used in its temporal sense, indicating events that occurred on or during the fourteenth day of the month. The entire phrase is modifying the Hebrew verb עָשָׂה *gãh-sãh'* [6213] (translated "kept"), which is a *Qal* stem in the imperfective form. This construction of the text shows that the action is occurring at the time indicated by the preposition *b;* i.e., Nisan 14.

The Hebrew phrase translated "at evening" also contains three words: the preposition בָּ *bãh,* the definite article (untranslated) and the noun עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]. In this phrase, the preposition *bãh* is used in a temporal sense to indicate the time of sunset *(geh'rev).* Because they kept the Passover entirely "on the fourteenth," it is clear that *geh'rev* in Joshua 5:10 denotes the sunset **beginning** the 14th day of the month. Thus the Passover observance in Joshua *5* corresponds perfectly with the Passover command in Exodus 12 to keep the lambs until the arrival of the fourteenth, when they were to be killed. This event was the initial act in the keeping *(gah-sah')* of the Passover (See Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* pp. 794-795.)

The Hebrew preposition *b* is used in both phrases to designate the exact time of the observance. The use of *b* in the phrase "on the fourteenth day of the month" informs us that all the elements of the Passover were kept *(gãh-sãh')* within the bounds of the fourteenth. In the following phrase, "at evening," *b* informs us that this Passover observance began at the time of sunset *(geh'rev),* which signaled the arrival of Nisan 14.

The relative *waw* that begins verse 11 shows that the events in the preceding verse have been completed and a new unit of time is being introduced. Notice: "And they ate of the old grain of the land **on the next day after the Passover**, unleavened cakes and roasted *new* grain in the same day."

The phrase "on the next day" is translated from מִמָּחֳרַת *moh-'ghorahth,* which is composed of the Hebrew preposition *mn* (assimilated as

m) and the noun *moh-'ghorahth'* [4283] (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1). *Mn* is used in a temporal sense in this phrase to express a specific period of time. Waltke describes the temporal function of the preposition *mn*: "*Temporal* uses of *mn* vary in relation to the beginning point, which may be included ('from, on, in', #5*)* or not ('after'; #6). Temporal *mn* can also mark a block of time ('after', #7)" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 212).

The preposition *mn* is used in Joshua 5:11 to describe the eating of the produce of the land "on the next day after [*moh-'ghorahth*] the Passover." The noun *moh-'ghorahth* is defined as "the day following a past day" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 564). Thus *moh-'ghorahth* includes the entire twenty-four hours of Nisan 15. Although the Israelites continued to eat of the produce after that day, the eating that is recorded in Joshua 5:11 was a special event—it was the first eating of the harvest on the Wave Sheaf Day.

As Owens shows, the noun *moh-'ghorahth'* [4283], translated by the *KJV* as "the morrow after," is used in construct *(Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1). The term "construct" denotes that *moh-'ghorahth'* is being modified by a noun phrase, or clause that follows (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew' Syntax,* pp.137-138). In Joshua 5:11, *moh-'ghorahth* is modified by the noun פֶּסַח *peh'sagh* [6453] ("passover"). Thus the Hebrew text designates "the morrow after" (i.e., Nisan 15) as separate from the observance of the Passover.

The Hebrew text clearly contradicts the claim that the eating of the lambs took place on Nisan 15. The *KJV* phrase "**on the morrow after**" does not include any period of time on which the Passover was kept. Every act related to keeping the Passover—including eating the lambs was completed on the preceding day, Nisan 14.

Appendix P
Joshua 8:28-29

"And Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a ruin to this day. And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening (*KJV* eventide). And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his body down from the tree and throw it down at the entrance to the gate of the city, and raise on it a great heap of stones, *still standing* to this day."

Some interpret this verse as evidence that "eventide" occurs before the sun goes down. Based on this assumption, they define the terms "eventide" and "evening" as the afternoon hours at the end of the day. Is that the meaning of Joshua 8:29?

An examination of the Hebrew phrasing in this verse will settle this question. The English expression "until eventide" is translated from four Hebrew words: the preposition עַד *gad* [5704], the noun עֵהֶח *gēhth* [6256], the definite article הַ *ha* (untranslated) and the noun *geh'rev.*

Like other Hebrew prepositions, *gad* has both spatial (location) and temporal (time) sense. In both uses, *gad* expresses progress toward a specific point. "The basic sense of the preposition [*gad*] is allative (movement toward)—terminative (movement up to)" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 215).

The basic sense of the preposition *gad* expresses movement toward *gēhth ha geh'rev,* which literally means "the time of *(gēhth)* evening *(geh'rev)"* (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* pp. 773, 787). Thus *gad* represents movement that is terminated when evening begins. The use of *gad* in Joshua 8:29 shows that the body of the king of Ai remained on the tree until the arrival of "eventide." The use of the noun *geh'rev* with the definite article *ha* designates this time as "the sunset." Thus the phrase "until eventide" is properly translated "until the sun had set."

The temporal sense of *gad* marks time up to a point at which the next event immediately takes place. In Joshua 8:29, the event which took place at "eventide" was the removing of the body of the King of Ai. This event occurred "as soon as the sun was down." To place any time between "eventide" and the going down of the sun violates the allative and terminative sense of *gad* as defined by Hebrew syntax. The preposition *gad* does not allow for any gap in time between the arrival of "eventide" and the setting of the sun.

An examination of the Hebrew text confirms that the expressions "eventide" and "as soon as the sun was down" are equivalent in meaning. The expression וּכְבוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ "and as soon as the sun was down") is composed of five Hebrew words: the conjunction וּ *waw,* the preposition כְּ *kaph,* the *Qal* verb בּוֹא *boh* [935], the definite article הַ *ha,* and the noun שֶׁמֶשׁ *sheh'mesh* [8121], The entire expression is an infinitive construct governed by the *Qal* verb בּוֹא *boh* [935] (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 1). This Hebrew verb has the root meaning "come in, come, go in, go" (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 97). As used in the infinitive construct in Joshua 8:29, it may be translated either as a subordinate clause ("as soon as the sun **was down**", *KJV*) or as a gerund ("at the **going down** of the sun," Owens).

Notice Waltke's remarks concerning the importance of the infinitive construct: "The ordinary Hebrew infinitive, called the **infinitive construct**, is a verbal noun used in the ways that English uses its infinitive ('to go') and its gerund ('going'). It is typically presented as the 'real' infinitive of Biblical

Hebrew, in contradistinction to the infinitive absolute (35.1). Like the infinitive absolute, but to an even greater degree, it is not unbounded, despite the etymology of 'infinitive' (Latin 'non-limited'). Rather, it can be suffixed, used as the first term of a construct phrase, and governed by a preposition" *(An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 598, emphasis added).

"**The most important use of the infinitive construct**, "as Ernst Jenni notes, "**is its use after prepositions** in place of a subordinate clause (with conjunction and finite verb)....**These temporal clauses are equivalent in sense**, and, since the gerund construction is awkward in English, the first construction is best translated like the second, employing a subordinate clause construction. The preposition used most commonly with infinitives is ל [*lamed*], and for this reason, we discuss it separately (36.2.3). The construction occurs with every preposition, but most frequently with ב [בְּ *b*] and כ [*kaph*], especially with a temporal sense. With the infinitive construct, ב [בְּ *b*] denotes in general temporal proximity of one event to another, כ [***kaph***] **more specifically the more immediately preceding time**" (Ibid., pp. 603-604, emphasis added).

The use of the preposition *kaph* in the infinitive construct in Joshua 8:29 denotes that the clause "as soon as the sun was down" is equivalent in sense with the immediately preceding time, which is "eventide." The king of Ai was hung on the tree until "eventide," or sunset, at which time his body was removed from the tree.

The Scriptural definition of "eventide" as sunset is firmly established by the structure of the Hebrew text. Thus Joshua 8:29 does not support the claim that the term "eventide" refers to the afternoon of the day.

Appendix Q
Jeremiah 6:4-5

"Prepare war against her; arise and let us go up at noon. Woe to us! For the day goes away, for the shadows of the evening [עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]] are stretched out. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces."

Rabbi Jose uses this passage to redefine the word "evening" as the period of time from noon to sunset. His interpretation of Jeremiah's words attempts to justify Judaism's change from the evening sacrifice of Scripture, which was offered at twilight בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153]) to an offering in the afternoon of the day.

In his exegesis of *bēhn hã arbayim* in Pesahim 5:1, Rabbi Jose acknowledges that *bēhn hã arbayim* is describing the time of twilight. However, in order to justify the tradition of Judaism, he chooses to define

"twilight" as the afternoon of the day. Although he admits to a lack of evidence in the Hebrew text, he interprets the expression "the shadows of the evening" in Jeremiah 6:4 as the shadows of the afternoon.

Because the phrase "at noon" is used in the same verse, the phrase "the shadows of the evening" may appear to refer to the shadows that are cast by the sun during the afternoon hours of the day. This interpretation views the phrase "at noon" as linked with "the shadows of the evening." The Hebrew text, however, establishes a distinct division between the two phrases, as signified by the use of the *atnah.*

The *atnah* is part of an accent system that "... punctuates the text and is therefore a very important feature in its syntactic analysis.... This feature of Hebrew grammar is so important for understanding that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 29).

Waltke explains the function of the *atnah* and other accent marks that are used in the Hebrew text: "Accents in the MT are of two kinds: disjunctives and conjunctives. Disjunctive accents, euphemistically dubbed 'lords' by earlier scholars, mark the length of pauses from full stop to various shades of shorter pauses; conjunctives, dubbed 'servants,' control the text up to the disjunctive. According to W. Wickes's comprehensive study of the accents, the disjunctives mark a continuous 'dichotomy' of the verse, that is, they divide larger units [of thought], beginning with the verse itself (marked off by ***silluq*** closing the verse), into successively smaller half-units on a syntactic (or logico-syntactic) basis. A unit ending with a disjunctive of one grade is divided into halves, and its halves in turn are divided into smaller units by other disjunctive signs until the whole verse is divided into single words, or groups of words joined by conjunctives. Israel Yeivin groups the major disjunctive accents as follows: 'Generally ***atnah*** divides the verse, *zaqef the* verse halves, *pashta* or *revia* the unit ending with *zaqef* and so on' " (Ibid.).

The use of the *atnah* in Jeremiah 6:4 divides the first thought that is expressed in the verse from the second thought:

> "Prepare war against her; arise and let us go up **at noon** [6672].
>
> [*atnah*]
>
> "Woe to us! For the day goes away, for the **shadows of the evening** [6153] are stretched out [5186],,

The phrase "shadows of the evening" is composed of the Hebrew plural noun צֵלֶל *tzeh'lel* [6752] and the noun pausal עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]. The term "pausal" denotes that *geh'rev* is marked by an accent (in this case, *silluq)* indicating the end of a unit of thought *(Gesenius'Hebrew Grammar,* p. 59).

As the *atnah* is used in the middle of Jeremiah 6:4 to divide the phrase "at noon" from "the shadows of the evening," so the *silluq* is used at the end of the verse to divide "the evening" from the phrase "by night" in the following verse.

"Woe to us! For the day [3117] goes away [6437], for **the shadows** [6752] **of the evening** [6153] are stretched out [5186].

[*silluq*]

"Arise, and let us go by night [3915], and let us destroy her palaces" (Jer. 6:4-5).

The use of the *atnah* and the *silluq* in the Hebrew text establishes a distinct division of thought between the three phrases that express time in Jeremiah 6:4-5. The first phrase, "at noon," is translated from two Hebrew words: the preposition בַּ *bah* and the noun צָהֳרָ *tzoh'har* [6672] with the plural ending ִים *im*—thus the form צָהֳרָיִם *tzoh'harim* [6672]. The prefixing of *bah* to *tzoh'harim* expresses the precise moment of noon, as accurately conveyed by the translation "at noon." This specific time of day occurs when the sun reaches the highest point in its meridian (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 843).

The noun *geh'rev* ("evening") is used in the second phrase to designate the time of sunset, and is defined accordingly by leading authorities (Ibid., p. 787). In addition, the noun *tzeh'lel* ("shadows") is used in construct with *geh'rev* (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 4). In this structure of the Hebrew text, the noun *geh'rev* is classified as a genitive because it functions as the owner or "possessor" of the noun *tzeh'lel* (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* pp. 137-138, 145). Thus the shadows *(tzeh'lel)* that Jeremiah is describing belong only to *geh'rev,* which is the time of sunset. These shadows do not belong to *tzoh'harim* ("noon") or to any part of the afternoon.

That "the shadows of the evening *[geh'rev]"* are the shadows of sunset is confirmed by the phrase "for the day goeth away." This phrase is composed of the conjunction כִּי, the verb פָּנָה *pãh-nãh'* [6437], the definite article ה *ha* and the noun יוֹם *yohm* [3117]. The verb *pãh-nãh'* is a *Qal* stem in the perfective form (Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 4). This verb has the root meaning *"to pass away, banish"* (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* p. 815). The perfective form of the verb "denotes in general that which is *concluded, completed,* and *past,* that which has happened and come into effect; but at the same time that which is *represented* as accomplished [as in prophetic writings], even though it be continued into present time or even be actually still future" *(Gesenius'Hebren' Grammar,* p. 125, note).

The use of *pãh-nãh'* in the perfective form reveals that the day being described in Jeremiah's prophecy has come to an end. The Hebrew text emphasizes that the day is ending by declaring, "For the **shadows** [צֵלֶל *tzeh'lel* [6752]] of the **evening** [עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153], denoting sunset] are **stretched out** [נָטָה *nah-tah* [5186].]" Owens translates this passage "for **lengthen** [נָטָה *nãh-tãh']* the shadows [צֵלֶל *tzeh'lel* [6752]] of evening עֶרֶב *geh'rev* [6153]]" *(Analytical Key to the Old Testament,* vol. 4).

The use of the genitive construct and the perfective form in the Hebrew text makes it clear that the lengthening shadows are the possession of evening or sunset, at the day's end. They are not the shadows of the afternoon. Thus this passage in the book of Jeremiah offers no basis for placing *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153] in the afternoon of the day.

Appendix R
Ezekiel 45:21

"In the first *month,* on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover; for the festival of seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten."

This passage appears to indicate that the 14th day of the first month is both the Passover day and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, this interpretation is contradicted by the command of God in Exodus 12, which states that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th. Exodus 12 also establishes the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a seven-day observance, but the Passover is only one day.

What then is the meaning of Ezekiel 45:21?

The King James translation of this verse is misleading because it does not convey the division of thought that is expressed in the Hebrew text. An examination of this verse in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* reveals that the verse is divided at the word פֶּסַח *peh'sagh* [6453] ("passover") by the *atnah,* an accent mark which indicates the end of a thought. The *atnah* is part of an accent system that "… punctuates the Hebrew text and is therefore a very important feature in its syntactic analysis….**This feature of Hebrew grammar is so important for understanding** that medieval Jewish sources paid more attention to it than to establishing the correct pronunciation of words" (Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* p. 29).

Waltke explains the function of the accent system in the Hebrew text: "Accents in the MT are of two kinds: disjunctives and conjunctives. Disjunctive accents, euphemistically dubbed 'lords' by earlier scholars, mark the length of pauses from full stop to various shades of shorter pauses; conjunctives, dubbed 'servants,' control the text up to the disjunctive. According to

W. Wickes's comprehensive study of the accents, the disjunctives mark a continuous 'dichotomy' of the verse, that is, they **divide larger units** [of thought], beginning with the verse itself (**marked off by *silluq* closing the verse**), into successively smaller half-units on a syntactic (or logico-syntactic) basis. A unit ending with a disjunctive of one grade is divided into halves, and its halves in turn are divided into smaller units by other disjunctive signs until the whole verse is divided into single words, or groups of words joined by conjunctives. Israel Yeivin groups the major disjunctive accents as follows: '**Generally *atnah* divides the verse**, *zaqef the* verse halves, *pashta* or *revia* the unit ending with *zaqef* and so on' "(Ibid.).

Owens notes the use of the *atnah* in his translation of Ezekiel 45:21 by showing a pause at the word "passover." He parses the verse as follows:

"in the first month
on the fourteenth
day
of the month
you shall celebrate
the feast of *the* passover

(logical pause)

a feast
for seven days
unleavened bread
shall be eaten"
(Analytical Key to the Old Testament, vol 4).

The logical pause that is expressed by the *atnah* in the Hebrew text divides the observance of the Passover from the observance of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thus Ezekiel 45:21 does not support *the* claim that *the* Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the Passover day.

Appendix S

בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם
Bēhn hã arbayim
in the Jerusalem Talmud

The Talmud, or the *Gemara*, is a lengthy commentary on the civil and religious laws and the ethical lore of the *Mishnah*. There are two major versions of the Talmud: the Palestinian (Jerusalem) Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. Each version is composed of sixty-three books, or tractates. A tractate is simply a treatise, or "tract" on a given subject. The

tractate that is cited in this appendix is the Pesahim, which exegetes Passover matters.

The rabbinical debates that are recorded in the Pesahim attempt to justify the changes that the leaders of Judaism had instituted in the Passover and the daily burnt offering of the evening. According to the Scriptural commands, both the Passover and the evening burnt offering were required to be sacrificed during *bēhn hã arbayim*, which was acknowledged as a term for the twilight of the day. However, the leaders of Judaism had redefined "twilight" as a period of time in the middle of the afternoon. A dilemma arose on Nisan 14 because it was impossible to conduct both sacrifices at the temple during the time that was designated as בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם *bēhn* [996] *hã arbayim* [6153] (2:30 to 3:30 PM by rabbinical definition). To accommodate the Passover sacrifice, each year on Nisan 14 the evening offering was moved outside the designated time.

A debate ensued over the legality of moving the evening offering outside the time that was officially recognized as *bēhn hã arbayim*. The Pesahim records the views of the following rabbis who debated the issue: Jose of Galilee, Joshua son of Levi, Ishmael son of Elisha, Jeremiah, Nathan, Yose son of Bun, Simeon son of Laqish, Yudan, and Samuel son of Avduma. These rabbis rely on the views of Hananiah son of Judah, Aqiba son of Joseph, and Ishmael son of Yohanan son of Beroqah.

Let us examine the rabbinical commentary that is recorded in the Pesahim of the Jerusalem (Yerushalmi) Talmud. Chapter 5 of the Pesahim relates the schedule of the daily burnt offering for all days other than Nisan 14, and shows the two adjustments that were made for Nisan 14. (Note: All single bracketed material is that of the editor of the Yerushalmi Pesahim. All double bracketed material is that of the author.)

Yerushalmi Pesahim
Chapter Five

"Introduction: Turning to the slaughter of the Passover sacrifice, Chapter 5 opens by describing the fourteenth of *Nisan's* special afternoon sequence of offerings in which the daily Tamid burnt offering is sacrificed before the Passover offering instead of being the last offering, as is usual.[1] The Gemara probes the exegetical basis and rationale for the standard procedure and for the special case of Passover eve [[a rabbinical term for the afternoon of Nisan 14]].

5:1

"[A] *The Tamid [daily offering] is* [[usually]] *slaughtered at the eighth-and-one-half* [hour after dawn, i.e., about 2:30 PM] *and offered at the ninth-and-one-half* [hour, for presumably the preparations and actual sacrificing take an hour].

[[Rabbi Jose of Galilee now comments on the Scriptural command for the daily burnt offering.]]

"[B] It is written, 'Now this is what you shall offer upon the altar,' etc. ["TWO yearling lambs each day, regularly" (TMYD)] (Exod. 29:38). I might have said that both of them should be offered in the morning or both of them at twilight. [Therefore] the teaching says, 'You shall offer the one lamb in the MORNING [and you shall offer the other (lit., "second") lamb at twilight]' (Exod. 29:39).

"I might have said that [the lamb] of the morning should be offered with the sunrise and that of the twilight with the sunset,[2] [therefore] the teaching says, 'at TWILIGHT [[בֵּין הָעַרְבָּיִם ***bēhn*** [996] ***hã arbayim*** [6153]]]."

[[Although Rabbi Jose acknowledges that *bēhn hã arbayim* refers to twilight, he proceeds to define "twilight" as the hours from noon to sunset. Notice Rabbi Jose's justification for this definition of *bēhn hã arbayim*.]]

"[C] Why did you see [fit] to say that 'twilight' [in Exod. 12:6 denotes] from the sixth hour [[noon]] and on? [For it says]:[3]

'[Up. we will attack at noon.] Alas for us.

For DAY IS DECLINING, the SHADOWS OF EVENING GROW LONG' (Jer. 6:4). [Here the word "evening" is applied to a period that ensues after the time of noon, once the day starts to decline and the shadows of evening start.] Just as 'evening' which is said there [denotes] from the sixth hour and on [after "noon"], so 'evening' which is said here [denotes] from the sixth hour and on.[4]"
[[*For a technical exegesis of Jeremiah 6:4, see Appendix Q.*]]

[[Rabbi Jose's next comment, which admits that there is no Scriptural proof for his interpretation, is omitted from the main text but is recorded in a footnote .]]

"[C] Why did you see [fit] to say that 'twilight' [in Exod. 12:6 denotes] from the sixth hour [[noon]] and on? [For it says]:[3]

"[3] The Venice edition, the first
printed edition of the
Leiden manuscript,
adds from the margin of the
Leiden manuscript:
**'even though there
is no proof for the matter,
(there is) a hint
to the matter'**

[[To support his interpretation of Jeremiah 6:4, Rabbi Jose cites the words of Rabbi Joshua b. Levi:]]

**Yerushalmi Pesahim
Chapter Five
(continued)**

"[D] [On the basis of C:] And should it be fit
[to offer a Passover sacrifice (YK)] from
the sixth hour [[noon]] and on?

"[E] R. Joshua b. Levi said, '[The idiom
"twilight" is made up of two words]
"BYN H^{C}RBYM." How [is this to be
understood]? Divide between the
evenings [taking BYN as "between"
and H^{C}RBYM as "evenings," perhaps
in the sense of the two periods in
which the day becomes darker;
hence, divide between the postnoon
period, when the day grows darker,
and the postafternoon period, when
the day becomes even darker with
the onset of night][5] and assign
[[on what authority?]]
two-and-one-half hours before it
"[the sacrifice] and two-and-one-half
hours after it and one hour [[2:30 to 3:30]]
for involvement with it [the doing and preparation of the
Tamid offering]. You as a result may
say that the Tamid offering is offered
at the ninth-and-one-half hour [[3:30]]
[and the time of the Passover sacrifice is
derived from that of the Tamid offering (*YK*)]."

This rabbinical interpretation:

1. Illegitimately places *bēhn hã arbayim* in the afternoon.
2. Illegitimately divides *bēhn hã arbayim* into three parts:

a. A period of time from noon to 2:30 PM, which the rabbis designate as the first evening.
b. A period of time from 2:30 to 3:30 PM, which the rabbis designate as *bēhn hã arbayim*.
c. A period of time from 3:30 PM to sunset, which the rabbis designate as the second evening.

This rabbinical interpretation served as the basis for the afternoon sacrifice of the daily burnt offering in the later years of the temple. On Nisan 14, the time of this offering was moved up one hour to accommodate the temple sacrifice of the Passover, and an additional hour if Nisan 14 fell on a Friday. These adjustments in the schedule for the daily burnt offering are recorded in the Pesahim:

"[A] *The Tamid [daily offering] is slaughtered at the eighth-and-one-half* [hour after dawn, i.e., about 2:30 PM] *and offered at the ninth-and-one-half* [hour, for presumably the preparations and actual sacrificing take an hour].

"[B] *On the eves of Passover, [it] is slaughtered at the seventh-and-one-half [hour] and offered at the eighth-and-one-half [hour]—whether [they] fall on a weekday or the Sabbath.*

"[C] *[If] Passover eve fell on the eve of Sabbath* [Friday, when extra time is needed so as to roast the Passover offering before the onset of the Sabbath, it] *is slaughtered at the sixth-and-one-half [hour] and offered at the seventh-and-one-half [hour], and the Passover offering follows it*."

The schedule for the afternoon sacrifice of the daily burnt offering on every day of the year except Nisan 14 is presented below in chart form. This schedule illustrates the rabbinical division of the afternoon hours into the "two evenings," with *bēhn hã arbayim* placed in the middle.

The Afternoon Sacrifice of the Daily Burnt Offering

Every Day Except Nisan 14

Bēhn hã arbayim
(2:30-3:30 PM)

Hour from sunrise:	**Modern equivalent:**	
eighth-and-one-half	2:30 PM	Daily offering slaughtered
ninth	3:00PM	
ninth-and-one-half	3:30 PM	Daily offering offered

The following two charts show the schedule for the afternoon sacrifice of the daily burnt offering on Nisan 14. These charts include the schedule for the temple sacrifice of the Passover lambs, which was conducted in three courses.

The Afternoon Sacrifice of the Daily Burnt Offering

When Nisan 14 Was Not a Friday

First Evening
(12 PM to 2:30 PM)

Hour from sunrise:	**Modern equivalent:**	
sixth	12:00 PM	1st evening begins
sixth-and-one-half	12:30 PM	
seventh	1:00PM	
seventh-and-one half	1:30 PM	Daily offering slaughtered
eighth	2:00 PM	
eighth-and-one-half	2:30 PM	Daily offering offered—1st evening ends

Bēhn hã arbayim
(2:30-3:30 PM)

eighth-and-one-half	2:30 PM	Bēhn hã arbayim begins
ninth	3:00 PM	Passover sacrificed (1st course)
ninth-and-one-half	3:30 PM	Bēhn hã arbayim ends

Second Evening
(3:30 PM to Sunset)

ninth-and-one-half	3:30 PM	2nd evening begins
tenth	4:00 PM	
tenth-and-one-half	4:30 PM	Passover sacrificed (2nd course)
eleventh	5:00 PM	
eleventh-and-one-half	5:30 PM	
twelfth	6:00 PM	Sunset—2nd evening ends Passover sacrificed (3rd course)

Note that this schedule did not allow the third course of Passover lambs to be sacrificed before sunset. If Nisan 14 fell on a Friday, the sacrifices would run over into the Sabbath. Thus the entire schedule for the daily offering and the Passover was moved up one additional hour when Nisan 14 was a Friday.

The Afternoon Sacrifice of the Daily Burnt Offering

When Nisan 14
Was a Friday

First Evening
(12 PM to 2:30 PM)

Hour from sunrise:	**Modern equivalent:**	
sixth	12:00 PM	1st evening begins
sixth-and-one-half	12:30 PM	Daily offering slaughtered
seventh	1:00 PM	
seventh-and-one-half	1:30 PM	Daily offering offered
eighth	2:00 PM	Passover sacrificed (1st course)
eighth-and-one-half	2:30 PM	1st evening ends

Bēhn hã arbayim
(2:30-3:30 PM)

eighth-and-one-half	2:30 PM	Bēhn hã arbayim begins
ninth	3:00 PM	
ninth-and-one-half	3:30 PM	Bēhn hã arbayim ends

Second Evening
(3:30 PM to Sunset)

ninth-and-one-half	3:30 PM	Passover sacrificed (2nd course) 2nd evening begins
tenth	4:00 PM	
tenth-and-one-half	4:30 PM	
eleventh	5:00 PM	Passover sacrificed (3rd course)
eleventh-and-one-half	5:30 PM	
twelfth	6:00 PM	Sunset—2nd evening ends

As the records of the Jerusalem Talmud show, each year on Nisan 14 the daily burnt offering was moved outside the time that the rabbis had designated as *bēhn hã arbayim*. Furthermore, only the first of the three courses of Passover lambs was sacrificed during the designated time. These historical records bear witness to the folly of the leaders of Judaism, whose traditional practices stood in violation to their own teachings.

Appendix T
Matthew 16:1-3

"Then the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to *Him*, tempting *Him and* asking Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He answered *and* said to them, 'When evening [*οψιας opsios* [3798]] has come, you say, "*It will be* fair weather, **for the sky is red**." And in the morning *[πρωι proi* [4404]], *you say,* "Today *it will* storm, for the sky is red and lowering." ' "

In this passage, Christ Himself defines the term "evening" and the term "morning." The color of the sky appears red at only two times of the day: sunset and sunrise. Thus Jesus equates "evening" and "morning" with the setting and rising of the sun.

Jesus' use of *the* Greek terms *opsios* ("evening") and *proi* ("morning") shows that these New Testament terms share *the* same definitions as the Hebrew terms that are used in the Old Testament. *The* Greek *opsios* and the Hebrew *geh'rev* are both used to denote the time of sunset and the arrival of *bēhn hã arbayim,* during which the light of day fades into darkness. Likewise, the Greek *proi* and the Hebrew *bõh'-ker* are both used to denote sunrise, or dawn, and the renewal of daylight.

Although the Greek term *opsios* ("evening") may also refer to the time immediately preceding sunset, as the day draws to a close, this term is never used to denote the afternoon of the day.

Appendix U
Mark 1:21, 29-32

"Then they went into Capernaum; and on the Sabbath day He immediately went into the synagogue *and* taught....And as soon as they had gone out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. And Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever. And they spoke to Him at once about her. And He came to *her*, and took her by the hand and raised her up. And immediately the fever left her, and she served them. Now **in *the* evening** [*οψιας opsios* [3798]], when the sun had gone down, they brought to Him all who were diseased, and those who were possessed by demons."

This passage in the Gospel of Mark confirms that the Greek term *opsios* (translated "at even" and "evening" in the *King James Version*) refers to the time of sunset. Berry translates the phrase "when the sun did set" [οτε εδυ ηλιος] as "when went down the sun" *(Interlinear Greek-English New Testament).*

To avoid incurring the wrath of the Pharisees, the people waited until the Sabbath had ended at sunset to bring their sick and possessed to Jesus. This New Testament record testifies to the fact that the days of the week are reckoned from sunset to sunset.

Appendix V
Matthew 26:20
Mark 14:17

"And after evening had come, He sat down with the twelve" (Matt. 26:20).
"Now after evening had come, He came with the twelve" (Mark 14:17).

What is the meaning of these two passages, which describe the time of Jesus' last Passover? It is obvious that Mark 14:17 cannot refer to *the* same period of time as the preceding verses, which record Jesus' command to Peter and John to go and prepare the Passover. Verse 12 reveals that Jesus delivered this command at the beginning of *bēhn hã arbayim,* immediately after the sun had set, when the lambs were being killed for the domestic observance on the night of Nisan 14.

Since *bēhn hã arbayim* is a relatively brief period of time, from between 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, it was evidently near the end of *bēhn hã arbayim* when the disciples completed the preparations for the Passover. This amount of time would have been sufficient, as all provisions for the meal, including the lamb, had been furnished by the master of the house (Mark 14:15, Luke 21:12). When the preparations were complete, Jesus arrived with the other disciples to eat the Passover.

In Matthew 26:20, the time of Jesus' arrival is stated as "And after evening **had come**...." In Mark 14:17, His arrival is described as follows: "And **in the evening** He cometh...." Both verses are translated from *the* Greek noun *οψιας opsios* [3798], which refers to the time of sunset, and the Greek participle γενομενης *genomenees,* which is a form of the verb *ginomai,* meaning "to come into being."

As a past participle in the second aorist tense, *genomenees* denotes an action which was in the immediate past. Some interlinears translate this participle as "evening **being come**," which indicates that "evening" (sunset) had just occurred. The Greek participle *genomenees* is more accurately translated: "Now **after** evening **had come**...." This translation gives the correct sense that a period of time had elapsed between the setting of the sun and Jesus' arrival to keep the Passover with His disciples.

The use of *the* Greek participle *genomenees* in Matthew 26:20 and Mark 14:17 confirms that Jesus observed His last Passover in the early hours of the night of Nisan 14. He sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare the Passover table at the beginning of *bēhn hã arbayim,* but He Himself waited to enter the city until the end of *bēhn hã arbayim* and the coming of darkness, so that He would not be discovered by the Jewish authorities and arrested before He had kept the Passover.

Appendix W
Matthew 27:49

"But the rest said, 'Let Him alone! Let us see if Elijah comes to save Him.' *Then another took a spear and thrust it into His side, and out came water and blood.*"

The latter half of this verse, which begins with the words "…And another took a spear…", has been omitted from the *King James Version*. However, a majority of the ancient manuscripts contain this part of the verse; these manuscripts include the Codex Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus, which are two of the most ancient. The latter part of the verse is also found in other manuscripts that are designated by letter (L, T, Z) and by number (33, 49, 892 and 1241).

Older translations which contain the complete verse are the Moffatt translation and the Fenton translation. Newer translations generally footnote this portion of Matthew 27:49 rather than including it in the text. The weight of evidence indicates that the latter half of the verse is an authentic part of the Greek text and should be included in translations of the New Testament. The veracity of this portion of Matthew 27:49 is substantiated by the record in John 19:34.

Appendices

X - Y

Appendix X

At Jesus' Last Passover— Did He Wash the Disciples' Feet Before or After Supper?

By Fred R. Coulter

At Jesus' last Passover, before He instituted the New Covenant Ceremony, He and the disciples partook of the Old Covenant Passover of roasted lamb and bitter herbs (Ex. 12:3-10). He then instituted the New Covenant Passover with the symbols of the broken unleavened bread and wine: "And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed *it*; *then He* broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took the cup; and after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it; for this is My blood, the *blood* of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for *the* remission of sins' " (Matt. 26:26-28; also see Mark 14:22-24 and Luke 22:19-20).

While these three accounts are very similar, they do not address Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Rather, we find this in John's Gospel—chapter 13. When we examine John's account, we also find that he did *not* write about the bread and wine of the New Covenant.

John's description of the event—as translated in the *KJV*—shows the timing of the foot washing as taking place *after* supper, and therefore after the bread and wine ceremony. But is that when it really occurred? Was the foot washing at the *beginning* or at the *conclusion* of the Passover service? Before we examine this question, there several things that must be kept in mind when dealing with topics such as this.

1) The Bible is inspired of God as written in the original language. Translations may or may not reflect the meaning of the original.
2) When there is an apparent conflict between scriptures, every facet of the problem must be considered.
3) When there is a difficulty with the *KJV*, an investigation into the Greek or Hebrew is often necessary to clarify the situation.
4) When dealing with the Gospels, a key to understanding is that no single Gospel account contains all of the facts and evidence on a given subject. The four Gospels are complimentary to each other and must be harmonized for a complete understanding.

Each Gospel account is essential. For example: During Jesus' ministry, Matthew and Mark show only one Passover; Luke shows two; John records three. If we did not have the accounts written by John and Luke, we would be missing vital keys concerning the timing and sequence of events recorded in the Gospels. Here are some examples:

1) John does not show the bread and wine ceremony, only the foot washing. So if only John were used as a guide, we would only know of the foot washing ceremony and nothing about the bread and wine.
2) Matthew, Mark, Luke and I Corinthians show only the bread and wine ceremony and not the foot washing; so if only these accounts were used, we would only observe the bread and wine ceremony of the Passover.
3) Matthew, Mark and Luke do not show that Judas ever left the meal to betray Jesus.
4) Matthew, Mark and Luke do not show the long discourses Jesus gave to His disciples after the supper—as does John in chapters 14-16.
5) Only Luke records the argument about who would be the greatest among the disciples.
6) Only Luke records the instruction concerning the taking of swords.

Thus, if one takes the negative approach of pitting each Gospel account against the other, the list of apparent contradictions throughout the Gospels would be almost endless. Because many scholars have taken precisely this approach, they are in hopeless confusion as to how to solve many of the so-called conflicts between the Gospel accounts.

The Apparent Problem

When we read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' last Passover, there is a question as to *when* Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Was it *after* the supper or *before*? The confusion is the result of a mistranslation.

In the *KJV*, John 13:2-5 reads: "**And supper being ended**, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and **began to wash the disciples' feet**, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

From this translation—"And supper being ended"—it appears that the foot washing took place *after* supper. However, when the Greek is closely examined, it is evident that it was not *after* supper but right at the *beginning* of supper.

In John 13:2, the Greek word used for this expression is γενομενον, which is derived from the prime root γενομαι. The prime root means *to be* or *to become* or *to come into being*. This means that γενομενον has the meaning of *during the taking place* of supper, or *while taking place*. Because its prime root can mean *coming into being*, γενομενον can have the implied meaning of *near the beginning* of supper—as differentiated from *ending* or "supper being ended."

There are other Greek words John would have used to show that sup-

per had actually *ended*. A Greek prime root word for "end" is τελος, which means "conclusion or termination of." The Greek for "being ended" is συντ ελες θεισων (see Luke 4:2 as an example). Notice that the prime root stem τελ– for "end" is the basis for this word. This would have been the word used to express "supper *being ended*." However, John did not use this particular Greek phrase because supper *had not ended*.

Therefore, the supposition that the foot washing did not take place until *after* supper is not supported by the Greek. A more accurate translation is this: "And during supper…." A *literal*, though awkward, translation reads, "And supper taking place," with the Greek implying "toward the beginning of supper"—not "after supper" as the *KJV* shows.

Now let's examine the rest of the John 13, and see that supper was continuing *up to* and *past* the time when Judas left, as the other accounts support:

13:2 And during supper [or, as supper was taking place] (the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, that he should betray Him)

13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father….

13:4 Rose from supper…. Additional proof that supper was *in progress*. Thus, the complete thought is: "During supper [i.e., the *beginning* of supper]…. Jesus knowing…. He rose <u>from</u> supper…. [and] began to wash the disciples' feet…. [and] sat down again" (summary through verse 12). "Sat down" could also read "reclined." With all the disciples in this reclining position, foot washing was easily carried out.

It becomes clear from the context that Jesus instituted the foot washing at the *beginning* of the Passover supper/ceremony. Then He sat down (or reclined) again to *finish* eating the Passover supper. If the supper were finished, there would obviously be no reason to sit down/recline again.

13:13-17 Jesus gives the explanation for the foot washing.

13:18 Jesus indicates that He has chosen Judas, one who is "<u>eating bread</u> <u>with</u> <u>Me</u>." As the Greek indicates, this statement is an active present tense fulfillment of that particular prophecy. So supper was *still in progress* because they were *still* eating. Mark 14:18 is even more direct, as Jesus is quoted in the first person saying that "one of you will deliver Me up, *even* he who <u>is</u> <u>eating</u> with Me."

13:26 Jesus dips the sop "morsel" and gives it to Judas. Satan enters into Judas and he immediately leaves. Supper was still in progress—not yet finished.

If supper were already *finished*, the disciples would not have assumed that Judas was going out to buy more things for the Feast (i.e., the Passover supper they were eating)—or that he was going out to give something to the poor who were also eating the Passover supper in different locations nearby, but who might not have enough to properly keep the Feast.

This again shows, in context, that supper was *still in progress* when Judas left. Matthew 26:21-25 and Mark 14:18-21 bring in additional details of the same account. However, John shows *when* Jesus gave the morsel to Judas and *when* he left.

- **The Conclusion Derived from John 13:** Only John's account shows *when* Judas left. John shows that Judas left while supper was *in progress* and immediately after receiving the sop. THEREFORE, THE FOOT WASHING COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE AFTER THE PASSOVER SUPPER HAD ENDED.

- **The breaking and eating of the bread took place while they were still eating supper**. Matthew 26:26 and Mark 14:22 show that *while they were eating* Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, etc. Therefore, supper was *still in progress* at this point. It would only be proper for Jesus to institute the breaking of the bread ceremony after Judas had left. Thus, Judas received only a *non*-ceremonial morsel from Jesus, symbolizing the betrayal.

- **Matthew, Mark, Luke and I Corinthians all show that the partaking of the wine was after the partaking of the bread.**

  Matthew 26:27
  Mark 14:23
  Luke 22:20
  I Corinthians 11:25
  All accounts are in agreement concerning the sequence of the partaking of the bread and wine.

<u>The wine was taken after supper. The foot washing did not occur after supper.</u>

Luke 22:20 and I Cor. 11:25 show that it was <u>after</u> supper when they partook of the wine. The Greek phrase is **μετα το δειπνησαι**. This cannot *mean* "during supper" in any way. *Meta* can only mean *after* the supper. Remember, Judas had already left *during* supper and the drinking of the wine was *after* supper. Therefore, Judas could not have taken part in the wine ceremony either.

Was Luke "confused" about the sequence?

On the surface, Luke's account (chapter 22) gives the *appearance* of a different sequence than the other Gospel accounts. Or does it?

Luke clearly states in verse 20 that the taking of the wine was *after* supper. Then, in verse 21, he mentions Judas' betrayal, but not by name (Luke does not show the dipping of the sop or that it was Judas who was the betrayer). And remember, John shows that Judas was not present during the taking of the bread and wine.

So why is Judas indirectly mentioned *after* the taking of the wine—when he had already left? Luke is simply recalling something that had *already* taken place.

Luke 22:21: "Moreover, behold the hand of him *who is* betraying Me up *is* with me at the table." Jesus made that statement while Judas was with Him at the table as the meal was in progress—even though it is here narrated *after* the drinking of the wine.

Moreover, verse 20 is a *past tense* action while verse 21 is in the *present progressive tense*. This means that the two verses are not necessarily in chronological order. Thus, there is no conflict in the overall chronology with the other Gospel accounts.

Conclusion

The Gospel accounts are in perfect harmony on the sequence of events of Jesus' last Passover. Apparent inconsistencies are due to incorrect translation. The foot washing clearly took place at the *beginning* of the Passover meal.

Appendix Y

Christ's Last Passover—Leavened or Unleavened?

By Ben T. Ambrose

For over 50 years, the Churches of God have kept the Biblical New Testament Passover ceremony commemorating the death of Jesus Christ. There are three parts required to partake of the Christian Passover: 1) foot-washing service which renews our baptismal vows in Christ and symbolizes what our relationship should be to God and to our fellow man, 2) partaking of unleavened bread symbolizing Christ's broken body which we are to eat, and 3) partaking of the wine symbolizing His shed blood representing the sacrifice of His life as the Redeemer of mankind.

Following the apostasy within the various Churches of God, confusion has arisen concerning whether leavened or unleavened bread should be eaten when one partakes of the Passover. Some claim that since Christ had the "law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2) within His human nature, the bread which He and the disciples ate at His last Passover was leavened, therefore we should be partaking of leavened bread in the Passover observance instead of unleavened bread, as God originally commanded (Exodus 12:8).

In Scripture, leaven is used to depict sin. Christians are admonished to remove the old leaven of malice and wickedness and to replace it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). This is why Christians are to remove physical leaven from their homes. In other words we are to put sin out and put in truth and righteousness. Additionally, leaven depicts false doctrines. In Matthew 16:11, Christ warned His disciples to "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" referring to their false doctrine, so Christians are to remove false doctrine and teaching as well.

While leaven symbolizes sin, it is never used in Scripture to symbolize the "law of sin and death" within a person. Christ had the "law of sin and death" within Him because His mother was human. Though He was tempted in all points as we are (Hebrews 4:15) and had the law of sin and death within him, He never sinned. Voluntarily, He took upon Himself the sins of the world bringing the death penalty upon Himself. Our sins were responsible for His death, not "the law of sin and death" within Him. Therefore, why would He use leaven which pictures sin to depict Himself when He never sinned?

Christ instituted the New Testament (Covenant) Passover using the footwashing, the bread and the wine during His last Passover before His death. What are the Biblical instructions concerning the manner in which Passover should be taken? It is absolutely imperative that the Passover be properly administered and understood.

"Partaking of the true Christian Passover with the New Testament symbols, as Jesus taught, is absolutely essential for salvation and to receive the full gift of eternal life at the resurrection. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ is the True Passover Lamb of God for all time, by the one perfect sacrifice of Himself....At His last Passover meal with the disciples, Jesus instituted the new symbols representing His body and His blood: "Jesus took bread and blessed *it*, *then He* broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took the cup; and after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it; for this is My blood, the *blood* of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for *the* remission of sins' " (Matthew 26:26-28).

When God instituted the first Passover for Israel, how important was it for Israel to follow God's instructions precisely to spare the lives of their firstborn when the Lord passed over their houses? Wasn't it a matter of life and death? How important is it for true Christians to take the Passover as instructed? Is it not also a matter of life and death? The consequences for not following instructions in the Old Testament was physical death. What would be the consequences for a true Christian to take the Passover improperly? Would it not be eternal death?

Due to the seriousness of this question, this article was written to establish what the Scripture instructs us concerning the eating of unleavened bread at Passover. Not only should we establish what the Bible says, but what it DOES NOT SAY as well.

Leavened or Unleavened?

The two words translated bread, or in conjunction with bread, in the New Testament are the Greek words: 1) *artos* (bread, loaf) and 2) *azumos* (unleavened). In addition, the word sop is translated from the word "*psomion*" which means "morsel or crumb." Why did Christ inspire "*artos*" to be used without distinguishing whether it was leavened or unleavened? Why did He inspire "*azumos*" to be used only when speaking of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a title? Why did Christ inspire the word "*psomion*" to be used in John 13 instead of the word "*artos*" or "*azumos*"?

Before going to the New Testament to examine this subject, let's look briefly at the original Passover instituted under the Old Covenant. For an in-depth study into the time the Passover is to be kept, the events involved in the Passover, and the meaning of the Old Testament Passover, you will find an excellent account given in *The Christian Passover*.

God had brought Egypt to utter ruin through the miraculous exploits performed through Moses. In preparation for the release of all Israelites held in bondage in Egypt, God was about to send the last plague which would bring Egypt to it's knees. God was positioning His people to escape Egypt through His divine intervention, direction and protection. This last plague was to be the most devastating of all—the killing of all the firstborn of man and beast in Egypt. It was not God's intention to kill His people. The Egyptians refused to let the children of Israel leave Egypt, therefore God was going to slay the firstborn of every man and beast.

God instructed the Israelites to distinguish their homes by putting the blood of a lamb on the doorposts. Wherever this blood appeared, the LORD would pass over their homes sparing their firstborn. Why did God have them do this? Did God need to have the mark to distinguish who His people were? Or was this a test of the obedience for the congregation of Israel? Did it not also have symbolic meaning to serve in teaching them an object lesson? What would have been the consequences had they not done as they were instructed? Their firstborn would have been killed as well.

God instructed all Israelites to enter their homes and to remain there throughout the entire night until day break. They were to prepare a meal consisting of roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. He told them to be dressed, to eat it in trepidation and be ready to leave at the signal of daybreak. These instructions were very explicit down to the last detail—including burning all the remains of the lamb before morning. If you knew that the LORD would pass through Egypt in a few short hours, and would kill every firstborn of man and beast of the disobedient, would you have taken those instructions lightly? If you did, you would have been struck dead if you were a firstborn.

The New Testament reveals that the One Who became Christ was the God of the Old Testament. The One Who became Christ performed these exploits through Moses. Christ is the One Who commanded that unleavened bread be eaten for the Passover (Exodus 12:8). Christ is the Author of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Was it just coincidental that the bread was unleavened because there was no time to prepare leavened bread? Or did God intend that it be unleavened throughout the Passover day and the seven days of Unleavened Bread? Would Christ eat leavened bread at His last Passover meal when He was the One Who commanded that unleavened bread be eaten at the original Passover? If Christ changed the bread from unleavened bread to leavened bread at His last Passover, why did He not command this and explain why he was changing the symbols?

In the greater festival area surrounding Jerusalem, the majority of the Jews kept a domestic Passover in private homes on the correct date of Nisan 14 and in the proper manner. However, many Jews and the religious leaders

of Judaism kept the Passover incorrectly on Nisan 15 with a temple sacrificed lamb. The Passover meal was eventually replaced with the traditional Jewish seder meal. In addition, they had combined the two feasts into one which became known as the "Passover of the Jews." John distinguishes it from the true Passover of God by calling it the "Passover of the Jews." Jesus Christ did not keep the Passover of the Jews. He kept the Passover that He instituted in the Old Testament at the same time, on the same day, and in the same way. At His last Passover, He changed its ceremonial symbolism to reflect the conditions of the New Covenant. The account of this is in John 13, Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22.

Why didn't Christ simply leave the ceremony as it was? What was the purpose of changing it? Did each ceremony have it's own individual symbolism and significance depicting two different things and serving two different purposes altogether?

Christ knew that the Jews were going to kill Him the following day. He knew the betrayal of Judas completed Judaism's total rejection of Him. Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Old Testament Passover ceremony. Since His death would completely fulfill the conditions of the Old Covenant, He replaced that ceremony with a new ceremony yet to be fulfilled. The Passover meal that the Jews would keep following His crucifixion was the Passover of the Rejected—not the Passover of God.

Let's look at the Scriptures concerning the eating of bread during the New Covenant Passover ceremony.

> "And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread and blessed *it; then He* broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My Body' " (Matthew 26:26).

In every case where bread is mentioned in the gospel account of this meal, the word is translated from the Greek word "*artos*." The word "sop" in John 13:26, 27 and 30 is translated from the Greek word "*psomion*" and means "morsel or crumb." Why did Christ use bread (*artos*) without prefacing it with the word for unleavened "*azumos*"? Can we judge from the original language whether these scriptures using the word "bread" determines whether the bread was leavened or unleavened? Can we determine that the word "sop" means a morsel of food or a piece of bread? What did the word "sop" mean to them? As found in the Passover accounts, was a "loaf of bread" the same as what we know as a "leavened loaf of bread" today. These are thought-provoking questions.

Below are the Scriptures in question and the Greek/English words used in each instance:

Matthew 26:26	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread
Mark 14:22	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread
Luke 22:19	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread
John 13: 18	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread
1 Co. 11:23	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread

1 Co. 11:26, 27	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread
John 13:26, 27, 30	morsel/*psomion*/πσομιο	crumb or morsel

As we examine the above scriptures, the New Testament **DOES NOT** show the bread to be leavened or unleavened. Why does God omit something this important? He had a purpose for doing so. What was that purpose? Could it have been the same purpose that He had Israel paint the doorpost with blood? A test command? Since we don't always know why God chose to inspire the New Testament scriptures to be written in the way that He did, we should take the approach that Mary took in Luke 2:51 and Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12.

> "...But His mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51).
>
> "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know exactly as I have been known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Let's look at the following Scriptures where the word bread (*artos*) is used:

> "And as they were eating, Jesus took the **bread** (*artos*/ αρτος), and blessed *it*, *then He* broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body' " (Matthew 26:26).
>
> "And as they were eating, Jesus took **bread** (artos/ αρτος); *and* after blessing *it*, He broke *it* and gave *it* to them, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body' " (Mark 14:22).
>
> "And He took **bread** (artos/αρτος), *and* after giving thanks, He broke *it* and gave *it* to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. This do in the remembrance of Me' " (Luke 22:19).
>
> "I am not speaking of you all; *for* I know whom I have chosen, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled: 'He who eats **bread** (artos/αρτος) with Me has lifted up his heel against Me' " (John 13:18).
>
> "Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I shall give a **sop** (morsel/*psomion*/πσομιον) after I have dipped *it*.' And when He had dipped the **sop** (morsel/*psomion*/πσομιον), He gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*. And after the **sop** (morsel/*psomion*/πσομιον), Satan entered into him. Then Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly' " (John 13:26-27).

> "So then, after receiving the **sop** (morsel/*psomion*/πσομιον) he immediately went out; and it was night" (John 13:30).

> "For as often as you eat this **bread** (artos/αρτος), and drink this cup, you *solemnly* proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes. For this reason, *if* anyone shall eat this **bread** (*artos*/α ρτος) or shall drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, he shall be guilty of the body and *the* blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and let him eat of the **bread** (*artos*/αρτος) and drink of the cup accordingly" (1 Corinthians 11:26-28).

The above Scriptures **DO NOT** refer to the state of bread that is being consumed. The word for "unleavened" in the Greek is not preceding the Greek word(s) for bread thus signifying the specific act of the eating of leavened or unleavened bread.

Since the Greek word(s) used for bread at the eating of Jesus' last Passover is the same word(s) used elsewhere to denote leavened bread, then how do we know Scriptures say that Jesus ate unleavened bread at the Passover? (See the Appendix at the end of the booklet that contains most of the Greek words for bread throughout the New Testament.)

We have looked at the Scriptures of Christ's last Passover concerning bread and sop, now let's look at Scriptures that pertain to **unleavened bread**.

> "Now on the first of the **unleaveneds** (*azumos*), the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You desire *that* we prepare for You to eat the Passover' " (Matthew 26:17).

> "Now after two days was the Passover and the *feast of* **unleavened** (*azumos*) bread, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might stealthily lay hold of Him *and* kill *Him*" (Mark 14:1).

> "And on the first day of the **unleaveneds** (*azumos*), when they were killing the Passover *lambs*, His disciples said to him, 'Where do You desire that we go and prepare, so that You may eat the Passover' " (Mark 14:12).

> "Now the feast of **unleavened** (*azumos*) *bread*, which *is* called Passover was approaching" (Luke 22:1).

> "Then came the day of the **unleaveneds** (*azumos*), in which it was obligatory to kill the Passover *lambs*" (Luke 22:7).

> "And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also. (Now those were *the* days of **unleavened** (*azumos*) **bread**)" (Acts 12:3).

> "But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of **Unleavened** (*azumos*) **Bread**, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed *for* seven days" (Acts 20:6).

> "Therefore, purge out the old leaven (*zume*), so that you may become a new lump, *even* as you are **unleavened** (*azumos*). For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. For this reason, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven (*zume*), nor with *the* leaven (*zume*) of malice and wickedness, but with *the* **unleavened** (*azumos*) *bread* of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

The above scriptures are the only verses where the word "unleavened" is used in the New Testament (according to the Bauer's Greek/English Lexicon). This word is always referring to a period of time known as the "**unleavened**"—not a specific piece or loaf of physical bread. The last two verses do not refer to bread but the spiritual condition of the individual being addressed. There is **NOT ONE** scripture in the New Testament dealing with an individual(s) eating bread where that bread is specified as being unleavened.

Now, let's look at the scriptures concerning (*zume*) leaven:

> "Another parable He spoke to them; 'The kingdom of heaven is compared to **leaven** (*zumoo*, dzoo-mo'-o; from; to cause to ferment:—leaven.,) which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until all was **leavened** (*zume*, dzoo'-may; prob.; ferment as if boiling up:—leaven)" (Matthew 13:33).

> "And Jesus said to them, 'Watch out, and be on guard against the **leaven** (*zume*) of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees' " (Matthew 16:6).

> "Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the **leaven** (*zume*) of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:12).

> "Then He charged them, saying, 'Watch out! Be on guard against the **leaven** (*zume*) of the Pharisees and of the **leaven** (*zume*) of Herod' " (Mark 8:15).

> "During this *time*, an innumerable multitude was gathering, *crowding* so *close* together that they were stepping on one another. First of all He began to speak to His disciples, *saying*, 'Guard yourselves from the **leaven** (*zume*) of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy' " (Luke 12:1).

> "It is like **leaven** (*zume*), which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until all was **leavened** (*zumoo*)" (Luke 13:21).

> "Your glorying *is* not good. Don't you know that a little **leaven** (*zume*) **leavens** (*zumoo*) the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old **leaven** (*zume*), so that you may become a new lump, *even* as you are **unleavened** (*zumos*). For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. For this reason, let us keep the feast, not with old **leaven** (*zume*), nor with *the* leaven of malice and wickedness, but with *the* **unleavened** (*zumos*) *bread* of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

> "A little **leaven** (*zume*) leavens the whole lump" (Galations 5:9).

The only conclusion is that one cannot determine from specific New Testament scriptures that the bread being eaten is unleavened bread or leavened bread. **NOT** a single one of these scriptures describe the fermented state of bread that was being eaten. All of these scriptures are using leaven either as an object lesson (such as a parable) or a character flaw or spiritual condition of someone. Therefore, one must go beyond the verse containing the word "bread" to determine whether it was leavened or unleavened bread being eaten.

To read a single verse in the New Testament where one is consuming bread and state that the bread being eaten was leavened based on the Greek word(s) runs the risk of making a false assumption. Due to the seriousness of the question, we cannot afford to do that.

Having determined that the New Testament makes no distinction concerning leavened or unleavened in this particular case, how does the Old Testament treat the subject? Looking at the scriptures below, can we determine if the bread is leavened or unleavened?

> "But he urgently pressed upon them, and they turned in to him and entered into his house. And he made them a feast, and baked **unleavened bread**, and they ate" (Genesis 19:3).

> "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and **unleavened *bread.*** They shall eat it with *bitter* herbs" (Exodus 12:8).

> "And Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day *in* which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for the LORD brought you out from this place by the strength of His hand. There shall be no **leavened bread** be eaten' " (Exodus 13:3).

> "And **unleavened** ***bread,*** and **cakes unleavened** mixed with oil, and **wafers unleavened** anointed with oil. You shall make them *of* wheat flour" (Exodus 29:2).

> "Along with the cakes, he shall offer *for* his offering **leavened bread** with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings" (Leviticus 7:13).

Without question the Old Testament clearly distinguishes whether the bread is **leavened** or **unleavened**. For Old Testament purposes, God inspired it to be written that way. God inspired it to be written in the New Testament the way He did for a very special purpose. If we place our faith in God by rightfully dividing the Word of God, we will understand its correct meaning.

IMPORTANT POINTS

1. God gave the direct commands about when to eat unleavened bread in the Old Testament.
2. The New Testament carries the spiritual connotation of leavened and unleavened.
3. The just shall live by faith and obey God's commands.
4. The New Testament is written to true Christians who are commanded to live by faith.
5. God has established what we are to do and observe. (Exodus. 12:17; 13:10; Deuteronomy 16:1-8)

While the New Testament doesn't necessarily differentiate between leavened and unleavened, in view of all the Scriptures pertaining to the symbolism and meaning of leavened and unleavened bread in the New Testament and taken in the context of the Old Testament Passover, the conclusion is that unleavened bread should be eaten at the Passover ceremony. We are to eat Christ in the sense of taking into our minds the truth He lived and taught which should be completely void of leaven or false teaching. We are to eat the broken bread symbolizing His broken body acknowledging our sins were part and parcel in causing His death, that He is now our Savior and His shed blood has atoned for our sins.

There are other examples where the Old Testament differentiates and the New Testament does not, such as, "clean and unclean meats," "keeping the seventh-day Sabbath," "paying tithes (10%)," and yes, "eating unleavened bread" at the appointed season.

Where in the New Testament does it say, "You shall not eat," and then lists the unclean animals like it does in the Old Testament? Yet, what do true New Testament Christians eat? Where in the New Testament does it say, "You shall keep the seventh day a Sabbath," etc? Why didn't God just make all these doctrines iron-clad sure so no one today could deny what the Scripture says on a given subject? Why didn't Christ just plainly say that the Passover was on the 14th and that we are to eat unleavened bread and not to

eat any leavened bread for a week during the days of unleavened bread?

Did God make a mistake or overlook something between the time He inspired the Old Testament and the time that He inspired the writing of the New Testament? True Christians should give thought and careful meditation as to why. It may be that God deliberately left things out of the Scripture—both Old and New Testament. In the accounts of Jacob in Genesis 37:11 and Mary the mother of Jesus in Luke 2:57, they didn't fully understand, but they didn't make unfounded assumptions. If we don't understand a given Scripture where it may appear to be a conflict, do we assume as this world does that Scripture contradicts itself? What does 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 mean? Surely we don't understand all things in the Scriptures. However, it is God's intent that His called-out ones understand the mystery of God hidden from this world (Colossians. 2:2-10). If we do not fully understand something, should we not look at our inadequacies for the moment and instead have faith in God that in due time He will give us the understanding we lack.

The question should not be, what does one Greek word in a verse of Scripture mean, but rather in light of both the Old and New Testament, what did Christ do, or what would He do? This is what we should be seeking—what Christ would do in any given situation. Then we can follow directly in His footsteps, imitating Him in every way.

A simple example might help. When I was a child, my family ate two kinds of cornbread. One was leavened made with corn meal, eggs, shortening, buttermilk, salt, and baking powder, and baked in the oven. The other type was unleavened, made of cornmeal, water, and salt cooked on top of the stove in a hot skillet in oil. The former would rise and puff up, the latter was thin, flat and solid and crispy around the edges. My mother cooked these two types of cornbread interchangeably from meal to meal, week to week. We called both types cornbread.

Let's say that in July, you came to visit. My family was sitting at the dining room table eating when you arrived. You were invited to join the family for dinner, but since you had just eaten, you declined and sat down in the sitting room OUT OF SIGHT of the dining table and the food until the family finished their meal. While you were waiting, you heard a family member in the dining room say, "Pass the cornbread, please." Based on the above, let's suppose you were now put in the position of having to answer the question: "Were they eating leavened cornbread or were they eating unleavened cornbread?" Let's say that this was a life or death question. What would your answer be? Rest assured, your chance of survival would be only 50%. Let's repeat the same drama, but alter only one small detail.

You came in the house and sat in the sitting room out of sight of the dining room table and heard someone say, "Pass the cornbread, please." You were again put to the "life or death" test. What kind of cornbread were they eating? Was it leavened or unleavened? You now have the added facts that this was 1952 and you and this family attended the Church of God and it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. What would your answer be? You would know that it was unleavened cornbread. Now your chance of survival would have increased from 50% to a fully assured 100%.

Let's shift our story now from our present day experience as outlined above, to Jesus' last Passover. We know the scriptures of the Pentateuch and we believe and live by these scriptures.

We are sitting outside the door to the upper room. We cannot see the food, but we can hear every word that is said by Jesus. We hear the discourse between John and Jesus. "...Lord, who is it?" Then Jesus answers, "After dipping this sop it is he to whom I shall give it." Within a minute we see Judas hurriedly pass by us and disappear into the night from where we are sitting by the door (John 13:26). After listening a while longer we hear Jesus pray a prayer of thanks over the bread. He then tells his disciples to eat it (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19).

Suppose we were now brought back to the present day. We find ourselves in a "life or death" situation to answer a question. Did Jesus eat leavened or unleavened bread at his last Passover?

What is the answer? If God Himself were to ask you this question, what would be your answer? This writer's answer is: Jesus ate <u>unleavened</u> bread!

What about eating leavened bread during the daylight portion of Nisan 14 as was the custom of the some of the churches of God.

> "The Gospel accounts of Jesus' last Passover with His disciples clearly describes the Passover day as "the first day of the unleaveneds." There is no question that the Gospel writers were referring to Nisan 14, as explained in detail in the book *The Christian Passover*. Understanding that the Passover Day was observed by Jesus Christ and the disciples as "the first day of the unleaveneds" may lead to questions in the minds of some Christians concerning the eating of leavened bread on the day portion of the Passover day—Nisan 14.
>
> "It is clear that in the Old Testament, unleavened bread was commanded to be eaten for the Passover meal on the night of the 14th, but there is no clear command concerning the remainder of the 14th. The commands of God state only that all leaven must be removed and destroyed before the beginning of the 15th without any reference to the eating leavened bread on the day portion of the 14th. By the commandment of God there are seven days of unleavened bread for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is not eight days long. However, the Passover is an additional feast day, and combined with the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread makes a total of eight days.
>
> "It is evident that in New Testament times the Passover day was by practice an unleavened bread day, as recorded in the New Testament scriptures of Matthew, Mark and Luke. While there is no command in the Old Testament which forbids eating leavened bread on the day portion of the Passover

> day, neither is there any statement allowing it. But it was the common practice in Judea, during Jesus' day, to collect all the leaven on the 13th of Nisan and to destroy the leaven on the morning of the 14th. In view of this practice, it is unlikely that Jesus and the disciples ate any leavened bread during the day portion of the Passover day. Nor is there any account that they did so. While the Gospels do not specifically tell us, it is reasonable to conclude that Jesus and the disciples observed the entirety of Nisan 14 as an unleavened day. Such a practice would be in accord with the first Passover observance in Egypt. The Old Testament records show that only unleavened bread was eaten on the day portion of the first Passover day, the 14th of Nisan. Although it is not a clear command of God in the Old Testament to keep the Passover day as an unleavened bread day today, it, nevertheless, is in accord with the New Testament practice which was followed by Jesus and the apostles, as recorded in the Gospel accounts. Since Jesus did not sin in any way, at any time, Jesus Christ and the apostles were clearly honoring God by observing the Passover day as an additional day of unleavened bread. The apostle Peter also wrote that we are to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:2 1). If they had not observed this practice, the Gospel writers would not have called the Passover day 'the first day of the unleaveneds.' They would have referred to it as just the Passover day with no reference to its 'unleavenedness.' Luke, who wrote his gospel account under Paul's supervision for the Gentiles, was most specific in designating the Passover day as an unleavened bread day; 'Then came the day of the unleaveneds, in which it was obligatory ti kill the Passover *lambs*' (Luke 22:7. (*Concerning the Eating of Unleavened Bread*, Fred R. Coulter)

Not only do the Gospel writers specifically designate the Passover day, as a full day of unleavenedness, but nearly all first century writers use the same terminology when writing of that day. It is clearly understood from the Greek text that Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 were not referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, the translators incorrectly inserted the word feast into the phrase "*on the first of the unleaveneds*," because the Gospel writers were not referring to the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, but to the Passover day itself; Nisan 14. The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on Nisan 15. This improper insertion of the word *feast* has caused much confusion.

Notice what Richard A. Parker, University of Chicago wrote concerning Nisan 14. "But on what authority should Hebrew translators, as Salkinson and Delitzch, introduce the word [the Hebrew word for feast, *chag* or *chagag*, or the Greek word for feast], into these texts, when the corresponding Greek phrase has no word [in it] for 'feast,' and only speaks of the 'first of the unleavened bread'— **a common expression for the Jewish**

14th with practically all first century writers. Furthermore, why attempt to change Luke's account of an actual passover meal (22:15) to agree with a common meal..." (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, Volume LXII 1944, "Ancient Jewish Calendation: A Criticism", emphasis added).

This is clear historical documentation that the Passover day itself; Nisan 14, was commonly called *the first of the unleavens*, or the *first day of the unleaveneds* by all first century writers.

Therefore, we can conclude, without a doubt that the Passover day was a full day of unleavenedness, most particularly bread. Furthermore, we can conclude with absolute certainly that the word "bread/*artos*/αρτος" used in the Gospel Passover accounts was unleavened. It is impossible for the bread used by Jesus and the disciples at Jesus' last Passover to have been leavened.

A NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDY ON "BREAD"

VERSE	JP GREEN INTERLINEAR	KJV	COULTER
Matt4:3	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	loaves of bread
Matt. 4:4	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Matt. 6:11	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Matt. 7:9	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Matt. 15:2	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	meal
Matt. 15:26	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Matt. 15:33	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	loaves
Matt. 15:34	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	loaves	loaves
Matt. 15:36	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	loaves	loaves
Matt. 16:5	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	loaves
Matt. 16:7	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	loaves
Matt. 16:8	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	loaves
Matt. 16:9	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	loaves	loaves
Matt. 16:10	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	loaves	loaves
Matt. 16:11	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Matt. 16:12	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Matt. 26:17	unleaven/*zumos*/ζυμος	unlv brd	unlv bread
Matt. 26:26	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 3:20	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	meal
Mark 6:8	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 6:36	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 6:37	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 7:2	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 7:5	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 7:27	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 8:4	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread

Mark 8:14	loaves/loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread/loaf	bread/loaf
Mark 8:16	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 8:17	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Mark 14:1	unlv brd/*zumos*/ζυμος	unlv brd	unlv bread
Mark 14:12	unlvn/*zumos*/ζυμος	unlv brd	unlv bread
Mark 14:22	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Luke 4:3	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Luke 4:4	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Luke 7:33	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Luke 15:17	loaves/*artos*/αρτος	bread	food
Luke 22:1	unln (brd) *zumos*	unln brd	unlvn brd
Luke 22:7	unln/*zumos*/ζυμος		unlvn brd
Luke 22:19	a loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
*Luke 24:30	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
*Luke 24:35	loaf/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
John 6:33	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
John 6:34	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
John 6:35	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
John 6:41	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
John 6:48	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
John 13:18	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
**John 21:9	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
**John 21:13	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
Acts 2:42	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	N/A
Acts 12:3	bread/*artos*/αρτος	unlv brd	N/A
Acts 20:6	bread/*artos*/αρτος	unlv brd	N/A
Acts 20:7	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	N/A
Acts 27:35	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	N/A
1 Co. 5:8	unlv/*zumos*	unlv (brd)	N/A
*1 Co. 10:16	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	N/A
1 Co. 10:17	brd/brd/*artos*/αρτος	bread	N/A
*1 Co. 11:23	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	N/A
*1 Co. 11:26	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
*1 Co. 11:27	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread
*1 Co. 11:28	bread/*artos*/αρτος	bread	bread

*****The <u>context</u> and the <u>context only</u> defines whether the bread referred to in these scriptures was leavened or unleavened. The Greek word(s) for bread as used in these New Testament scriptures **DO NOT** signify whether it was leavened or unleavened. However, the **CONTEXT MUST** be used to supply the correct understanding. The context in these verses show that this bread was **UNLEAVENED**. To say or believe otherwise is to say that Jesus broke the command of God given in Exodus 12:8 and Deuteronomy 16:1-8.

**These two scriptures serve as an example of where it is <u>impossible</u> for us to state emphatically whether the bread here referred to is either leavened or

unleavened. In my understanding of this incident, there is nothing in the CONTEXT that can be used to show what kind of bread was to being eaten (leavened or unleavened). It may have been leavened or unleavened. God has so inspired the writing of the New Testament concerning this subject that the determination must be made by the individual, not only in faith, looking at the context in which it is written.

Abbreviations
and
Symbols

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AT	Author's Translation
Ant.	Antiquities of Jews, Josephus
b.	*Babli,* Babylonian Talmud thus b. Pes. is tractate Pesahim ***of*** the Babylonian Talmud
Bk.	Book
BJ	*Belluni Judaicum*
cf.	Compare (from Latin confer)
Ch.	Chapter
I Chron.	I Chronicles
II Chron.	II Chronicles
Col.	Colossians
Cor.	I Corinthians
II Cor.	II Corinthians
Dan.	Daniel
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Dt.	Deuteronomy
e.g.	for example (from the Latin exempli gratia)
Eph.	Ephesians
Ex.	Exodus
Exod.	Exodus
Ezk.	Ezekiel
Ezek.	Ezekiel
f	following page; 225f means "page 225 and following page"
ff	following pages (see above)
Gal.	Galatians
Gen.	Genesis
Gn.	Genesis
Heb.	Hebrews
i.e.	that is (from Latin id est)
Ibid.	in the same place (from the latin ibidem)
Ib.	the same (see above)
Isa.	Isaiah
JPSA	Jewish Publication Society of America
Jub.	Jubilees
Judg.	Judges
KJV	King James Version
Lam.	Lamentations
Lev.	Leviticus
LXX	Septuagint
M. AB.	Mishnah Aboth
M Men.,	Mishnah Menahoth
M. Pes.	Mishnah Pesahim
Mat.	Matthew
Matt.	Matthew
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
Num.	Numbers
p.	page
pp.	pages
Pes.	Pesahim, Mishnah
I Pet.	I Peter
II Pet.	II Peter
Phil.	Philippians
Pro.	Proverbs
Prov.	Proverbs
Psa.	Psalm
Rev.	Revelation
Rom.	Romans
RSV	Revised Standard Version
I Sam.	I Samuel
SB	Schocken Bible
Sec.	Section
sic	thus (from the Latin; inserted beside an error in order to make clear that the original has been copied accurately
I Tim.	I Timothy
II Tim.	II Timothy
Tit.	Titus
v.	verse
vv.	verses
Vol.	Volume
Zech.	Zechariah

Symbols

[ ]	A parenthetical thought inserted into a quote for explanation.
( )	A parenthetical thought inserted for explanation.
…	Showing deliberately omitted text at the beginning of a new sentence. The first dot represents a period.
…	Showing deliberately omitted text in the context of a sentence.

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Glossary of Terms

A Day's Delay, a term applied to the daylight portion of Nisan 14 by those who support a Passover on the same night as the Exodus.

Ad, a Hebrew preposition that limits time to a specific point, not through and beyond that point; translated "unto" (until) in Ex. 12:6.

Akal, a Hebrew verb meaning "to eat, to consume, to dine"; found in Ex. 12:48, Ezra 6:19-22.

An, a Greek particle which denotes that the action of a verb is dependent on circumstance or condition; found in I Cor. 11:25-26.

Anomos, a Greek word meaning "lawlessness, against law, or against law and commandment keeping."

Asah, a Hebrew verb meaning "to observe, keep or accomplish"; found in Ex. 12:47-48; Ezra 6:19-22.

Ba erev, a Hebrew prepositional phrase meaning "at even, at evening, or at sunset."

Baptizoo, a Greek verb meaning "to baptize, dip, immerse, plunge, drench, overwhelm."

Baqar, a Hebrew noun meaning "herd" or "bovine."

Bashal, a Hebrew word meaning "boil, sodden, seethe"; found in Ex.12:9, Ex. 16:23; 29:31; 34:26, Lev. 6:21; 8:31, Num. 6:19, Deut. 14:12.

Bayith, a Hebrew noun meaning "house, houses, household."

Ben ha arbayim, a fanciful dual or idiom. A prepositional phrase literally meaning "between the two evenings," defined in Scriptures as the period of time between sunset and dark. Used only in the following Scriptures: Exodus 12:6; 16:12; 29:39, 41; 30:8; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:3, 5, 11; 28:4, 8.

Boqer, Hebrew noun meaning "sunrise, the break of dawn, morning."

Cahna-bal, a term for the priests of Baal, human flesh eaters; origin of the word cannibal.

Ceremonial Law, rules governing the animal sacrifices and temple rituals commanded under the Old Covenant.

Cohorayim, Hebrew for "midday," see also ***Ntothhayom***

Day, according to Scripture a twenty-four hour period beginning at sunset and ending at sunset.

Dei, Greek word meaning "mandatory, compulsory, obligatory, one must, or has to, is required to, compulsion of duty and compulsion of law."

Diatheekee, Greek noun meaning "covenant."

Doulos, Greek word meaning "slave, or servant."

Ean, variant spelling of the particle *an.*

Ennuxon, Greek word meaning "in the night"; mistranslated "early in the morning while it was yet dark" in Mark 1:35, *KJV*.

Erev, Hebrew noun meaning sunset. Used in prepositional phrase *"ba erev"* meaning "at sunset."

Ethuon, Greek verb meaning "they were killing"; used in Mark 14:12 in reference to the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

Evening offering, a lamb originally offered daily at *ben ha arbayim* as a burnt-offering.

Evening watch, the first watch of the three watches which were set through the night, extending from approximately 6 PM to 10 PM.

First watch, the evening watch.

Gehth, a Hebrew noun meaning "time." Translated "the time of' in Genesis 8:11.

Genomai, Greek root for *genomenon.*

Genomenon, Greek participle meaning "was taking place, or taking place"; mistranslated "being ended" in John 13:2, *KJV*.

Gennoomenon, Greek participle meaning "being begotten"; used in Luke 1:35.

Ghihphazohn, a Hebrew noun translated "haste"; a state of mind meaning trepidation, not the physical action of "hurried flight"; used in Exodus 12 11

Ginooskoo, Greek verb meaning "to know by self-experience."

Habboqer, see Morning watch

Hagiographa, the Psalms and other writings, one of the three divisions of the Old Testament, 183;

Hayah, Hebrew verb translated "were" in Genesis 1:5.

Homoioma, Homoiomati, Greek words meaning "likeness, the same"; found in Phil. 2:7.

Homoioo, Greek verb meaning "to make like, make someone like a person or a thing, become like, be like"; found in Heb. 2:17.

Huparchoon, Greek participle meaning a state of being, "actually existing as," or "pre-existing as"; found in Phil. 2:6.

Hupo, Greek preposition meaning "under, under the power of, or subject to the power of"; found in Gal. 4:4-5.

K, a Hebrew preposition.

Kaph boh ha Sheh'mesh, Hebrew expression for "at the going down of the sun." Used in Deuteronomy 16:6

Kath Omoioteeta, Greek phrase meaning "according to the likeness"; found in Heb. 4:15.

Kleeros, Greek noun meaning "lot or part"; used in connection with *meros.*

Lailah, Hebrew noun meaning "night," the period of darkness which commences at the end of *ben ha arbayim* and continues until *boqer,* the crack of dawn.

Lamed, the most common of Hebrew prepositions. Often abbreviated 1.

Lord's Supper, a title applied to the Christian Passover, denounced by Paul in I Cor. 11:20.

Louoo, Greek verb meaning "to wash," or "to bathe," used in reference to the cleansing of a person spiritually through baptism.

Malak, Hebrew noun meaning "angel."

M moh- 'ghorahth, a prepositional phrase composed of the Hebrew preposition *mn* and the noun *moh-'ghorahth.* Translated "on the morrow after" in Numbers 33:3 and Joshua 5:11 Literally translated "the day following a *past* day."

Meros, Greek noun meaning "a part of something, a standing, a share, a place with someone"; used in connection with *kleeros.*

Middle watch, the second of the three night watches, extending from approximately 10 PM to 2 AM.

Miphkad Altar, an altar located on the Mount of Olives east of the temple, upon which all sin offerings were burnt and to which the ashes of all temple sacrifices were taken.

Mishna, or *Mishnah,* a compilation of the traditions of Judaism, written by Rabbinical Pharisees in the 200's AD.

Morning offering, a lamb offered daily as a burnt-offering just after sunrise.

Morning watch, called *habboqer* in the Hebrew, the third of the three night watches, extending from approximately 2AM to 6AM.

Moshab, Hebrew noun meaning "dwelling places."

Nisan 14, the 14th day of the 1st month according to the Hebrew/ Jewish calendar; the original Passover day.

Nisan 15, the 15th day of the 1st month according to the Hebrew/ Jewish calendar the day beginning of the Exodus from Egypt; the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Noon, A "fanciful dual." *Tzoh 'harim* is literally defined as the "time of the double shadow" This Hebrew word is describing the time period when the shortening shadows cast by the rising sun are offset by lengthening shadows cast back toward the east as the sun approaches its apex and continues westward.

Ntothhayom, Hebrew for "afternoon' 50; see also ***Cohorayim***

Ohel, Hebrew noun meaning "movable, portable tent or dwelling"; found in Ex. 16:16.

Olah, Hebrew noun meaning "burnt-offering"; found in Num. 28:6.

Opheioo, Greek verb meaning "to owe, be indebted, be obligated, one must, one ought"; found in Heb. 2:17.

Osakis, Greek word translated "as often as"; found in I Cor. *11:25-26.*

Osakis an esthieete, Greek phrase meaning "as often as you may eat."

Osakis an pineete, Greek phrase meaning "as often as you may drink."

Ou, variant spelling of *ouk.*

Ouk, a Greek negative adverb denoting the impossibility of an action; found in I Cor. 11:20.

Parapleesioos, Greek word meaning "in like manner," found in Heb. 2:14.

Passover offerings, a term which refers to burnt, peace and thank-offerings given during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but not to the sacrifice of the Passover lambs.

Pesah or *Pesach,* Hebrew for "Passover."

Qarob, Hebrew word for offering in general; found in Num. 28:2.

Shacht, Hebrew verb meaning "to slaughter, to sacrifice, to kill or to offer"; found in Ex. 12:6. Phonetic pronunciation is *shah-'ghat'*.

Sook-kaw, Hebrew noun meaning "booth, tent or temporary dwelling," whence the phrase "Feast of Booths or *Succoth."*

Ta azuma, Greek word meaning "the unleavened"; singular form of *toon azumoon.*

Talmud, see *Mishna.*

Tee de protee toon azumoon, Greek phrase translated "Now on the first of the unleaveneds." See Matt. 26:17; Mark 14;12; Luke 22:7.

Third watch, the morning watch.

Toon azumoon, Greek word meaning "the unleaveneds"; plural of *ta azuma.*

Tsacah, Hebrew verb meaning "roast"; found in Ex. 12:9; not found in Deut. 16:7.

Unleavened Bread, Hebrew Mazzot, a feast of seven days commencing at sunset as Nisan 15 begins and lasting until or sunset as Nisan 21 ends.

Wave sheaf, a sheaf of barley cut just after sunset, at the very beginning of the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and waved by the high priest on the next morning (Lev. 23:11); a symbol of the resurrected Christ's acceptance by God the Father when He ascended to heaven.

Yohm, Hebrew noun meaning a twenty-four hour period, translated "day" or the period of lightness immediately following *boqer,* or dawn, and continuing until *erev,* or sunset.

Zebah, Hebrew noun meaning "peace offering;" not found in Num. 28:16.

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