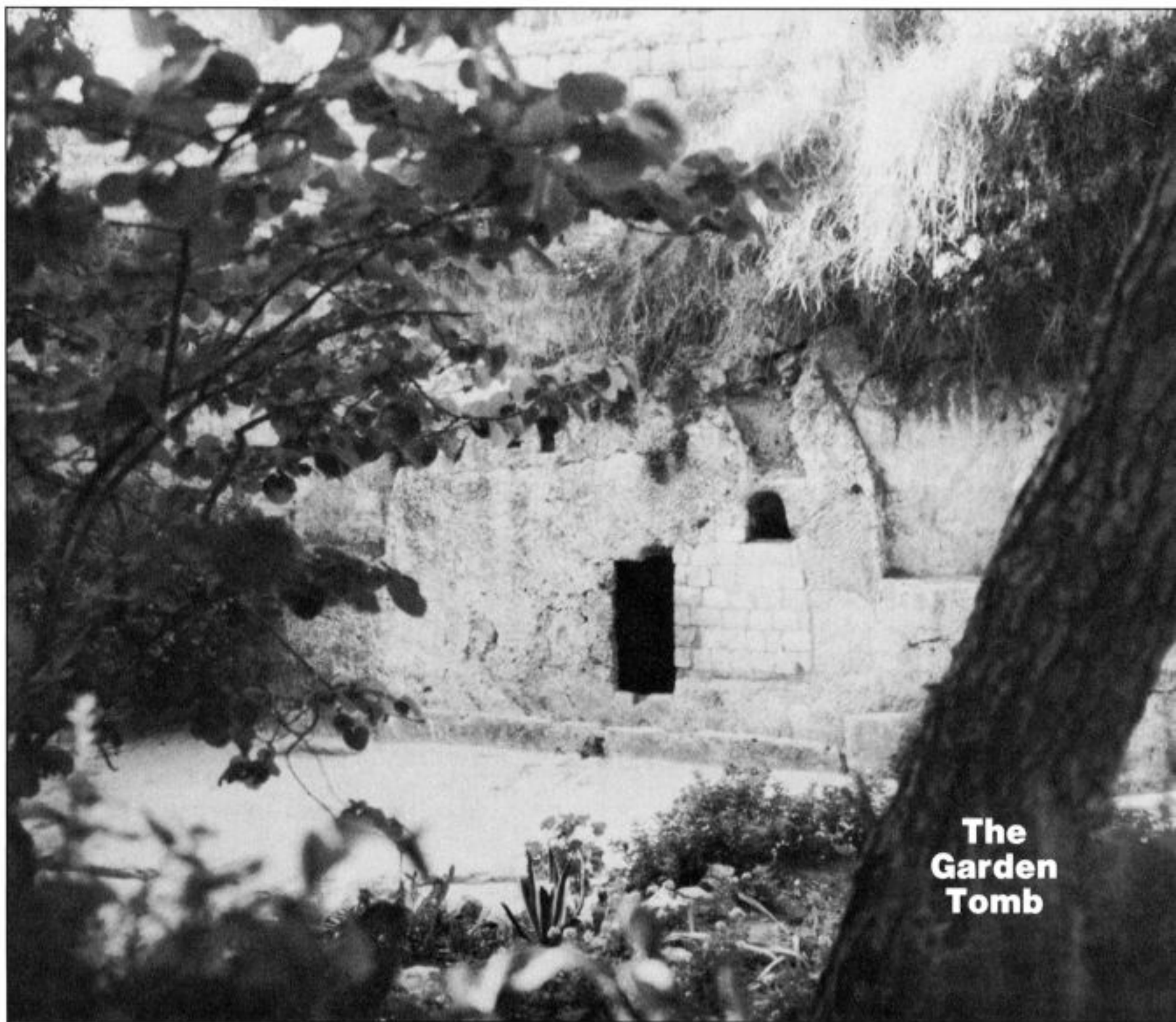




THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
Bible
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



**The
Garden
Tomb**

WHAT OUR STUDENTS SAY

"Please let me say how very thankful I am that I have been receiving the Bible correspondence course. Lesson 23 has really helped me to understand more about the meaning of God's Holy Days. I see now how they all fit together."

—E.C., Parkdale, Oregon

"My husband and I are studying Lesson 23. How wonderful to learn how God's plan is revealed by seven annual festivals. Now we are also beginning to understand the real meaning involved in keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. We are looking forward to Lesson 24 to learn how we can make God's weekly Sabbath a spiritual blessing and a delight."

—Mrs. R.M., Twentynine Palms, California

"I just received Lesson 23 today and am sending for the supplementary reading material so I can study it all together. I am beginning to see the light concerning a lot of things I have been taught to believe that were not true, such as Sunday being God's Sabbath."

—C.H., Foley, Alabama

"I just received Lesson 23 of The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. I have wished for a long time that you would have a study on God's Holy Days. The Bible course has helped me so much in my understanding of the Bible. I can hardly wait for each lesson. When I sit down to study, time seems to fly by."

—K.F., Clarksville, Arkansas

"Thank you so very much for your Bible course. I have learned more truth from my Bible study with this course during the last three or four years than during all of the rest of my life. May God bless my sister for sending you my name. I cannot tell you how thankful I am."

—L.B., Chicago, Illinois

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THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

Bible CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 25

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About Our Cover . . .

On the evening of the Passover, A.D. 31, Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to observe this annual festival with new symbols in memory of His approaching suffering and death. The following morning, Jesus was crucified, and then buried just before sunset. The Garden Tomb, located just outside the Old City of Jerusalem, is where some believe Jesus' body was placed. This lesson reveals exactly how and why Christ's suffering and death are to be commemorated by Christians today.

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PASSOVER

The *Beginning* of God's Master Plan

Paul said Christ is "our passover" sacrifice. What did he mean? Most people assume that Christ's death FINISHED the plan of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let's understand why.

As Jesus Christ was expiring His last breath on the cross, He exclaimed: "It is finished" (John 19:30). Traditional Christianity therefore has assumed that the death of Christ finished God's plan of salvation.

But *what* was finished?

It was the *work* the Father commissioned Jesus to do (John 17:4). That work included the sacrifice of His life as "our passover" (I Cor. 5:7) to pay the penalty of our sins.

But the death of Jesus did *not finish* the plan of salvation! Not at all. It was only the beginning—the *first step* in God's Master Plan.

Passover Pictured Christ's Sacrifice

The first Passover was observed by the ancient Israelites just before their exodus from Egypt. They had been slaves in Egypt for nearly a century before God freed them through a series of plagues He caused to punish their Egyptian captors for refusing to let them go. The 10th and last plague was *death* for every firstborn in Egypt.

But none of the Israelites were harmed.

God, through Moses, had instructed every Israelite family in Egypt to sacrifice a lamb and smear some of its blood on the doorposts of their

EGYPT—Just before delivering the ancient Israelites from slavery in the land of Egypt, God instituted the Passover—a foreshadow pointing to Jesus Christ's sacrifice to save us from the penalty of sin.



houses. On the night this was done, the death angel *passed over* every house marked with lamb's blood.

God protected the ancient Israelites from physical death through a symbol—the blood of these lambs. This was symbolic of the *blood of Christ*, the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29), which would be shed much later to make possible the *spiritual* salvation of mankind.

With the institution of the Passover, God began to reveal to His newly forming nation and congregation (“church”—Acts 7:38) *seven annual festivals*, and commanded that they be observed forever.

Why These Festivals?

God's annual festivals and Holy Days have tremendous spiritual meaning. They not only bring His people together in holy convocations (commanded religious assemblies), but more importantly, they reveal His great *Master Plan* by which He is fulfilling His awesome purpose for humanity!

The annual observances God instituted reveal a step-by-step outline of *how* He is accomplishing His supreme purpose. Each portrays a great event in God's plan for the salvation of all mankind.

But the vast majority are deceived by Satan, the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9). They don't understand the true way to salvation. That's because they do not know what sin is, nor what its penalty is. Consequently they don't really know *why* man needs a Savior! The meaning of repentance is not understood, or what God's way of life is all about. They don't understand what God's Spirit is, why we need it, or how to receive it.

The religions of this world do not understand the processes of spiritual begetting, growth and birth into God's divine Family. They do not know that God is now calling only a *few* into His Church, or that those few are now being trained to rule in Christ's soon-coming world-ruling government. Nor do they realize that the vast “unsaved” majority will be given their opportunity for salvation in a later, more favorable age, when Christ and His Spirit-born assistants are ruling the earth.

All this truth is pictured by God's annual festivals and Holy Days! Those who faithfully observe these commanded days are *reminded* of these spiritual truths every year.

Just as the weekly Sabbath, if kept the way God intended, keeps *man* in a right relationship with his Creator and in the understanding of His great purpose for mankind, so the annual festivals and Sabbaths keep the *Church* in a right knowledge of

His plan. Any group that refuses to keep holy the days God made holy is not in a right relationship with God, and simply does *not understand the true way to salvation!*

God's days are for God's people—His Church. It will be through His Church, during Christ's coming reign on earth, that the rest of the world will learn of these days and their vitally important meaning for mankind.

New Testament Memorial of Christ's Death

God commanded the ancient Israelites to observe the Passover as a *yearly reminder* of His delivering their firstborn from death in Egypt. Christians today are also commanded by God to observe the Passover, with its New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine, as a *yearly reminder* of His delivering them from the penalty of eternal death through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, “our passover” (I Cor. 5:7), who became the New Testament Passover “Lamb” (John 1:29).

The Bible clearly shows that the death of Christ is the first event, the *first step*, in God's great plan for eventually bringing thousands of millions into His divine Family. The Passover, the first of God's annual festivals, pictures that event. Jesus commanded that it be observed *every year*, with new symbols, so we would always remember His great sacrifice for us.

The Church Jesus built and promised to preserve understands that the New Testament Passover is the annual memorial of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ—that it pictures our being reconciled to God through a Savior who rescued us from the penalty of our past sins.

But this deceived world does not understand the *real meaning* of Christ's sacrifice. Instead of keeping the Passover, traditional Christianity observes Easter, supposedly in honor of Christ's resurrection. Yet the Bible nowhere commands us to celebrate His resurrection. And the world even has the resurrection on the wrong day! (The origin of Easter, and what the Bible says about this and other religious holidays, will be covered in a future lesson.)

God's Church has the precious knowledge of His truth, and His Spirit-begotten children faithfully observe *all* of His annual festivals!

You are about to begin a fascinating series of lessons that will thoroughly explain the meaning of God's seven annual festivals and Holy Days. Let's begin studying the details of the first step in God's marvelous Master Plan—the *Passover*.

LESSON 25

Passover Lamb Prophetic of Christ's Sacrifice

God's annual festivals are full of meaning. They were given to teach us the knowledge of the *seven steps* in God's plan for our spiritual salvation and Sonship in His Family.

God first began to reveal His festivals and Holy Days to the ancient Israelites while they were slaves in Egypt. It was then that God commanded His people to observe the Passover. Today, we can understand that this festival pictures the *first step* in God's Master Plan.

The Old Testament Passover was a commemoration of the *first* Passover God instituted for the deliverance of the Israelites' firstborn from the plague of death. God had been pouring out His plagues on Egypt to influence the Pharaoh to free the Israelites so they could worship Him in the wilderness (Exodus chapters 5 through 11).

We find the historical record of the first Passover in the 12th chapter of Exodus.

1. Before God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, did He reveal when the new year should begin? Ex. 12:1-2. What is the name of the first month of the year as God counts time? Ex. 13:4.

SPRINGTIME—God commanded the Israelites to begin the new year in the spring.



COMMENT: The Israelites had been in Egyptian bondage for nearly a century. They were forced to work seven days a week and adapt to the Egyptian calendar and Egyptian holidays. It was now God's time to reverse this situation and claim these descendants of righteous Abraham as His own chosen people (Deut. 7:8). They needed a complete reorganization of their social, religious and work customs.

God began by correcting the way they were keeping time. He commanded that the month Abib (which came to be called Nisan after the Babylonian captivity—Esther 3:7) be their first month. "Abib" is derived from the Hebrew word *aviv*, meaning "ears" or "green ears of grain." It is the month in which green ears of grain ripen—barley first, then winter wheat, which is usually still in green ears when the barley ripens. Thus God's calendar begins in the *spring* in the Northern Hemisphere.

It should be noted, however, that the civil New Year celebrated by the Jews today is in the autumn. Although the Jews use Abib as the first month for religious reckoning, they use Tishri, the seventh month of God's calendar, as the beginning of the civil and governmental year.

As we learned in Lesson 23, God has used the Jews to preserve the Hebrew scriptures and calendar by which His Church, using the instructions preserved in the Bible, can accurately calculate when God's festivals are to be observed.

2. What was each Israelite family to do on the 10th day of Abib? Ex. 12:3. Were they to select lambs without any deformities, diseases or imperfections? Verse 5. What is Jesus Christ called in John 1:29? Were the Israelites' lambs therefore prophetic of Christ, our Savior "Lamb," who was *sinless*—without spiritual blemish or spot? I Pet. 1:19.

3. On what day of the first month were the Israelites to slay the lambs they had selected? Ex. 12:6.

COMMENT: The Hebrew from which "in the evening" is translated literally means "between the two evenings" (see margin of most King James Versions). The Jewish Publication Society translated this phrase "at dusk" (1955 edition of *The Holy Scriptures*) and "at twilight" (1962 edition). To judge from this translation, the first evening is when the sun goes over the horizon and the new day begins; the second evening when it has become dark and the stars are visible.

Some Jewish commentators redefine this phrase. But the teaching of the Church of God is that the lambs were killed just after sunset, in the very beginning of the 14th of Abib.

4. As soon as the lambs were killed, what was to be done with some of their blood? Verses 7, 22. Were the Israelites then to roast and eat the lambs with unleavened bread and bitter herbs? Verse 8.

5. What happened to the Egyptian firstborn on this night of the first Passover? Verses 12, 29. Had God promised not to kill—to “pass over”—the Israelites’ firstborn? Verse 13. Was it the lambs’ blood they had struck on the side and upper doorposts of their houses that saved the firstborn from death? Same verse.

COMMENT: The Israelites’ firstborn clearly were protected from the plague of death by the *blood* of the lambs that had been applied to the doorposts of their houses. It was a “token” or sign showing that the household was to be spared.

Today, we can be protected from the penalty of eternal death our sins have earned through the *blood of Christ*, “our passover” Lamb, who was “sacrificed for us” (I Cor. 5:7).

God had Israel act out, in a physical way, a type or foreshadow of Christ, “the Lamb of God”—“Christ our passover”—who would come nearly 1,500 years later to shed His blood, giving His perfect, sinless life as a sacrifice to pay the penalty of our transgressions of God’s Law.

6. For how long did God command Israel to keep the Passover? Ex. 12:14, 24.

COMMENT: *Before* making His covenant with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, God commanded them to keep the Passover *forever*—not just until Christ’s death, which ended that covenant. When God declares a law to be everlasting, He means it! No authorization from God was ever given to cease observing this tremendously important festival!

From its first institution in Egypt, the Passover became a yearly memorial of the Eternal’s passing over Israel and sparing their firstborn from death. But the Passover also looked forward to the time when the Savior of all humanity would come to *shed His blood*, paying the penalty of human sin *in full* by His sacrifice, thus making possible the remission of our sins upon repentance and baptism.

Jesus Kept the Passover

1. When Jesus was young, did He go to Jerusalem with His parents, who kept the Passover every year? Luke 2:40-42.



H. Armstrong Roberts

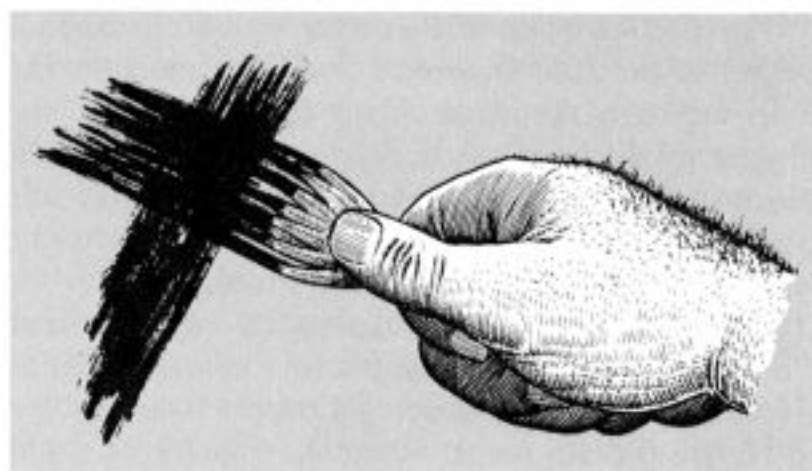


Illustration by Basil Wolverton

2. When Jesus began His ministry, did He continue to observe the Passover? John 2:13, 23.

COMMENT: Before and during His ministry, Jesus kept all of God’s annual festivals, including the Passover. He, as the LORD of the Old Testament, is the One who revealed these festivals to ancient Israel and kept them Himself during His life on earth as a human being!

Before His crucifixion, Christ instructed His disciples how the *New Testament* Passover should be observed by true Christians in remembrance of His suffering and death, as we’ll see a little later in this lesson.

3. Did Jesus observe the Passover with His 12 disciples on the night before He was crucified? Matt. 26:17-21; Luke 22:13-15.

COMMENT: Just before instituting the New Testament Passover symbols on the evening of the 14th of Abib, Jesus and His disciples ate roast lamb, as He had ordained for the original Old Testament observance of this festival.

It should be noted, however, that they were not eating a sin offering. The Passover lamb is nowhere called a sin offering in the Bible. The Bible plainly shows that sin offerings were not instituted until *after* the Israelites had come out of

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

(1 Corinthians 5:7)

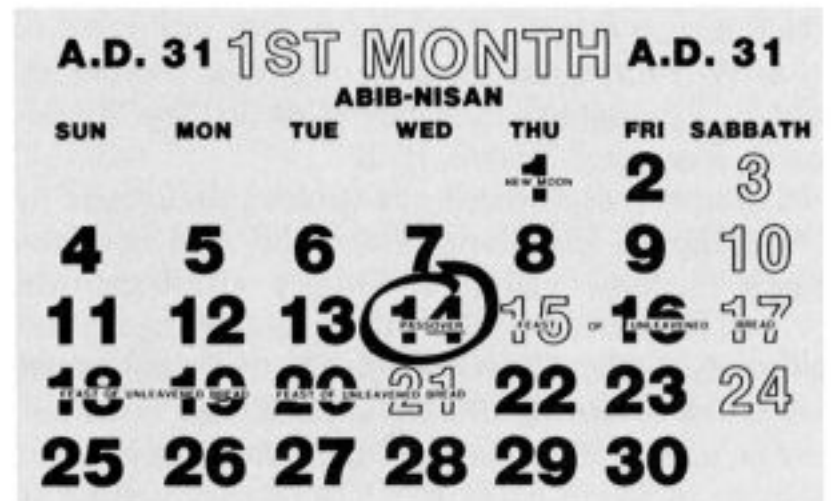
Chronology of events on the day of Christ's crucifixion, A.D. 31

14th of Abib

Evening (after sunset)	Night (before dawn)	Morning (after dawn)	Afternoon (about 3 pm)
Christ institutes ordinance of foot washing and new symbols of unleavened bread and wine during last Passover meal. Matt. 26:20, 26-29 Mark 14:17, 22-25 Luke 22:14-20 John 13:1-17	Christ teaches His disciples, prays, is betrayed and arrested, questioned by Annas and informally tried by the Sanhedrin. Matt. 26:30-75 Mark 14:26-72 Luke 22:24-65 John 13:31-18:27	Christ is formally tried and condemned, appears before Pilate, Herod, Pilate again, scourged and nailed to the cross. Matt. 27:1-45 Mark 15:1-33 Luke 22:66-23:45 John 18:28-19:27	Christ is speared in the side by a Roman soldier and killed; His body carried to the tomb just before sunset. Matt. 27:46-60 Mark 15:34-46 Luke 23:46-54 John 19:28-42

The "Lamb of God" Sacrificed on Passover Day

The shed blood of lambs applied by the ancient Israelites to the doorposts of their houses protected their firstborn from the plague of death. Today, we can be protected from eternal death through the blood of Christ, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29), who was sacrificed for us on the day of the Passover, A.D. 31.



Egypt—until *after* the Ten Commandments were given at Mt. Sinai and *broken*.

The Passover was instituted in Egypt *weeks before* the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai and was repeated in the covenant made at Sinai, but it was *not instituted* by that covenant! The sacrifices instituted *after* the covenant was made and ratified at Sinai ceased to be necessary at Christ's death. Therefore they were not perpetuated by symbols in the New Testament Church. Only the Passover is continued; and it only with the new symbols of unleavened bread and wine. This was thoroughly explained in Lesson 17.

4. Were the Jews of Judea in Jesus' day observing the Passover *one day later* than He and His disciples? John 18:28; 19:14.

COMMENT: The Apostle John shows that the Pharisees and Sadducees held the Passover at a later time than did Christ. The Jews in Judea did not observe the biblical Passover at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan (Abib). They killed their lambs toward the *end* (in the afternoon) of the 14th and ate them on the night of the 15th, the first Holy or High Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

To this day, the Jews do not distinguish between the night of the Passover (Ex. 12:22) and

the night *after* the Passover, when the Israelites left Egypt (Num. 33:3; Ex. 12:42). Therefore the Jews today do not keep the real Passover at the time or in the manner Jesus instructed His disciples. They eat their ceremonial Passover meal, consisting of roast lamb and bitter herbs, on the evening of the 15th.

Christ Institutes Ordinance of Humility

On the evening before Jesus Christ's crucifixion, while He and His disciples were partaking of the Old Testament Passover lamb for the last time, Jesus gave some specific commands for His New Testament Church. The Apostle John recorded the first vital part of Jesus' institution of the *New Testament Passover*.

1. Did Jesus wash His disciples' feet as part of the *new* way of observing the Passover? John 13:1-5.

COMMENT: In verse 2, the words "and supper being ended" should properly be rendered "and during supper," as it is in a number of modern translations. Nevertheless, the washing of feet was not part of the Old Testament Passover. This was

being instituted for the first time by Christ Himself!

2. Did Peter, at first, refuse to allow Jesus to wash his feet? Verses 6-8. Could Peter have any relationship with Jesus unless he allowed Him to wash his feet? Verse 8.

COMMENT: Since open-toed sandals were the customary footwear of the day, feet could become quite dirty. Foot washing, upon entering a house, was considered a menial task, usually done by the lowest servants.

Peter, not yet understanding the purpose of the ceremony Jesus was then instituting, protested. But Jesus explained that unless Peter took part in the foot-washing ceremony, he could have no relationship with Him—he could not be a *Christian*! Neither can we.

3. Why did Jesus institute this new observance of foot washing in connection with the New Testament Passover? Verses 12-16.

COMMENT: By washing their feet, Jesus was illustrating to His disciples that He had come to earth to *serve* mankind. Shortly afterward, He proved the extent of His willing and loving service when He gave His very *life* for the sins of all mankind! (John 15:13). He suffered the most humiliating and excruciatingly painful death imaginable in order to save us all from the penalty of eternal death!

Jesus explained that if He, being the Master, would serve mankind, then His disciples ought to also serve one another and the world. Jesus instituted foot washing in connection with the New Testament Passover as a *symbol of service*. It is a physical *reminder* of the principle He had taught them before: that they ought to be “as the Son of Man [who] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28, RAV).

A willingness to serve and help others is an essential part of every Christian’s training to be a loving ruler in God’s Kingdom, where every ruler will administer God’s government for the *benefit of others* rather than himself (Luke 22:25-27).

Notice what the Apostle Paul, who practiced what he preached, tells us about having a servant’s attitude: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. . . . Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who . . . made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. . . . He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil. 2:3, 5-8, NIV).

The New Testament shows that Christ’s apostles did serve, just as He did, preaching the Gospel

of the Kingdom of God. History records that most of them also gave their lives in that service.

4. Did Jesus plainly command His disciples to wash one another’s feet? John 13:14-15. Were they to teach the world to do likewise? Matt. 28:19-20.

COMMENT: Some today, who are not yielded to God’s will and are unwilling to be servants, do not want to humble themselves by washing someone else’s feet. But Christ made it absolutely clear that *all Christians* should follow His example of service to others! If Jesus is our Lord and Master, we also “ought to wash one another’s feet” at the Passover service once each year.

5. What *special blessing* is promised to those who obey Christ’s words by participating in this meaningful ceremony at the Passover service? John 13:17; 14:23.

The New Symbols

Now let’s notice what else Jesus commanded His disciples to do after He finished washing their feet.

1. What completely *new way* of observing the Passover did Jesus institute shortly before His crucifixion? Luke 22:19-20; Matt. 26:26-29.

2. Was unleavened bread to symbolically represent Christ’s body, which was to be brutally beaten and cut open for mankind? Luke 22:19; Matt. 26:26.

COMMENT: We know that Jesus was using unleavened bread because the Old Testament Passover was always eaten with unleavened bread (Ex. 12:8).

3. Was wine to symbolically represent His blood, which was to be shed for the forgiveness of past sins? Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:27-29; Rom. 3:25. (More about the meaning of breaking and eating the unleavened bread and drinking the wine shortly.)

COMMENT: The “fruit of the vine” Jesus gave His disciples was *fermented wine*, not grape juice. Grape juice could be made only in the autumn, and could not be preserved until spring. It was either fermented into wine, or else made into a heavy syrup that was used as a sweetener.

This definitely was not grape juice or syrup! In Jesus’ day, the Jews used only fermented wine at the Passover.

The Bible nowhere condemns the drinking of alcoholic beverages—only their *abuse*. If we obey Jesus’ command—“This do . . . in remembrance of me” (I Cor. 11:25)—we will drink a very small amount of wine once each year at the Passover service in remembrance of Christ’s shed blood.

4. Had Jesus previously told the Pharisees, in a statement they did not understand, that unless a person *symbolically eats* His body and *drinks* His blood, he has no hope of receiving eternal life? John 6:48, 53-54.

COMMENT: Some believe that when Jesus said "This is my body . . . this is my blood," or spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He meant those statements to be understood literally—that the bread and the wine miraculously become His literal flesh and blood. This is not what Jesus meant at all!

The word "is" (in both Greek and English) also means "represents." That is its *obvious meaning* in Matthew 13:38, for example. The unleavened bread and wine are *symbols* that *represent* the body and blood of Jesus Christ!

5. Does Jesus' command to follow His example in taking unleavened bread and wine at the Passover (Luke 22:19-20) also apply to Christians throughout all ages? Matt. 28:19-20; I Cor. 11:23-26.

COMMENT: Jesus instituted this ordinance on the eve of His crucifixion. He showed His disciples how to keep the New Testament Passover and commands us to follow that example today.

Jesus did not abolish the Passover—He merely changed the *symbols* used. Instead of shedding the blood of a lamb and eating its roasted body, we are now to use unleavened bread and wine.

Why Christ Had to Suffer

After Christ instituted the New Testament Passover symbols, He gave His disciples some final

instructions and warnings, as well as encouragement. These are recorded for us by the Apostle John in John 13:31 through 16:33.

Read this entire passage and notice how Jesus used this opportunity not to do away with God's Law, but to *emphasize* it! He warned the disciples of His imminent crucifixion and that they would also be persecuted. He promised that He would be resurrected and that they would receive the Holy Spirit. He promised to answer their prayers, giving them the authority to use His name in their requests to the Father.

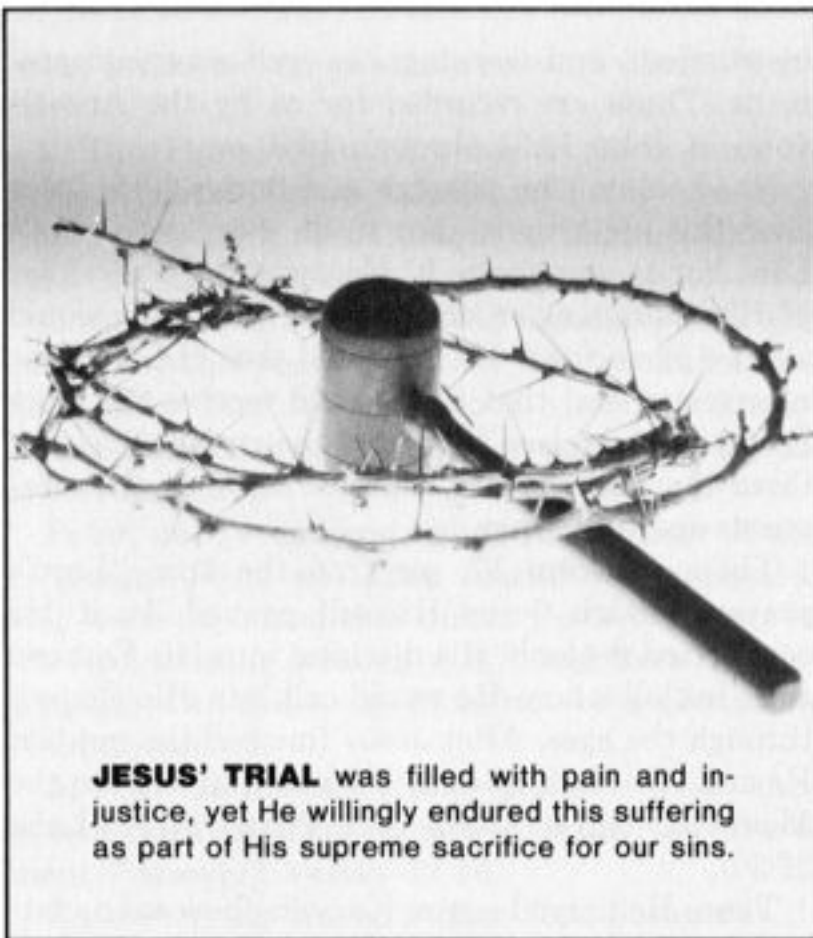
Then, in John 17, we find the true "Lord's prayer," which Jesus Himself prayed. In it He committed not only His disciples into His Father's care, but all whom He would call into His Church through the ages. After Jesus finished this prayer, He and His disciples sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives (John 18:1; Matt. 26:30; Luke 22:39).

There He prayed again. Knowing how excruciatingly painful His death would be, Jesus prayed with *great fervency* to escape the extreme pain and suffering that was to come (Luke 22:41-44). Three times He asked His Father if it would be possible to begin His plan of salvation for mankind in some other way (Matt. 26:39-44). "Nevertheless," Jesus prayed, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Then Christ, betrayed by one of His disciples, was arrested like a common criminal, and all His friends deserted Him (Matt. 26:47-56). He was illegally brought before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish court) by night, beaten and spit upon (verse 67), then sent to Pilate and Herod and mocked by their



NEW PASSOVER SYMBOLS—Instead of shedding the blood of a Passover lamb and eating its roasted body, Christ commands His followers today to commemorate His suffering and death by partaking of the New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine.



JESUS' TRIAL was filled with pain and injustice, yet He willingly endured this suffering as part of His supreme sacrifice for our sins.

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soldiers (Luke 23:11; John 19:2-3). Yet in all this Jesus never sinned, never became angry or vindictive—not even when crucified! (Luke 23:34). He knew all of this was an essential part in God's plan to expand His divine Family. Seeing the end result, He counted it all joy (Heb. 12:2).

1. Before delivering Christ to be crucified, did Pilate have Him scourged? Matt. 27:26. Was He so brutally beaten that He became unrecognizable? Isa. 52:14. Also read Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12, and verses 1, 6-8, 13-18 of Psalm 22.

COMMENT: These prophecies in Isaiah and in the Psalms were written hundreds of years in advance. They vividly described the suffering the coming Messiah—our Savior—was to experience!

Scourging was a common punishment in the time of Christ, but in our modern times we have difficulty imagining such cruelty. The victim was stripped to the waist, bent over and tied to a post, and then beaten with a flagellum—a multi-lashed whip made of leather thongs weighted down with broken shards of bone and sharp jagged pieces of metal. In a Roman scourging, called the “halfway death,” the victim was beaten until just short of dying from the multiple wounds.

Christ suffered this merciless beating, which tore open His flesh, disfigured Him, and caused Him to bleed from dozens of open gashes and cuts. Even some of His ribs were exposed. Most victims were allowed to recover, but Jesus was not. Like a criminal, He was then forced to carry His own stake, but He was so weakened by His terrible

chastisement that He fell under its weight after only a short distance. Outside the city, at the Place of the Skull (Golgotha), Jesus was nailed to the cross.

Crucifixion was the most shameful—and most painful—form of execution. Not only were spikes driven into the hands and feet and the body suspended from these open wounds, but breathing was also agonizingly difficult. Victims would sometimes struggle on their crosses for as long as three days, suffering pain, sunstroke, heat exhaustion and loss of blood, finally dying from muscle exhaustion and suffocation.

Our Savior suffered an incredibly painful, brutal death. And He did this *voluntarily*. He did this for us—for the whole world!

2. Did Jesus suffer this excruciatingly painful torture so we might receive *healing* of our bodies through faith in His beaten body? Isa. 53:5; I Pet. 2:24; Ps. 103:2-3; Jas. 5:14-15.

COMMENT: Through His beating, scourging and crucifixion, Jesus Christ paid the penalty of our *physical* sins—transgressions of God's laws of health—which are the *cause* of all sickness (Matt. 9:1-7). He suffered so we, through faith in His body that was beaten for us, may be forgiven all our *physical* sins—the healing of our bodies when we are sick—in addition to being forgiven our *spiritual* sins (the breaking of God's spiritual laws) through His shed blood.

That is why Jesus instituted the *breaking* of unleavened bread as part of the New Testament Passover service. It is a symbol of His broken flesh to remind us that it is by His “stripes we are healed.” (For more information about this important subject, request our free booklet *The Plain Truth About Healing*.)

Why Christ Had to Die

Jesus Christ did more than suffer for us. He who was God in the flesh died—*ceased to exist!* In that day His thoughts perished (Ps. 146:4). Since He was made flesh, He died the same kind of death all mortals do. But exactly why did He have to die? Let's understand.

1. Was Jesus Christ, before His human birth, the “Word” or Spokesman of the God Family—the One by whom God the Father created all things? John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:16-17; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2, 10.

2. Did the God Family foreordain that the Spokesman would become a human who would be slain, like a lamb, to become our Savior? I Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8.

TWELVE REASONS WHY JESUS' TRIAL WAS ILLEGAL

THE trial of Jesus Christ was without legal precedent. He was convicted and executed even though Pilate found Him innocent! Let's briefly notice the 12 outstanding reasons why the arrest, trial and conviction of Jesus were illegal.

1. There was no legal basis for Jesus' arrest because no one had presented a formal charge of any crime; He simply was taken. Moreover, those who went with Judas to have Jesus arrested included the priests and elders—His judges (Luke 22:52)—among whom were the ones who bribed Judas!

2. Jesus was subjected to a secret preliminary examination at night (John 18:12-14, 19-23). Jewish law permitted only daylight proceedings.

3. The indictment against Jesus was illegal because the judges themselves brought up the charge without any prior testimony by witnesses. The Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) by law was not allowed to originate charges.

4. The court illegally proceeded to hold its trial of Jesus before sunrise so no one would be available to testify on His behalf.

5. The trial began on a day before an annual Sabbath (John 18:28), even though Jewish law did not permit the trial of a capital offense to begin on a Friday or the day before an annual Sabbath. Jesus was arrested and tried on the 14th of Abib, the day before the first annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

6. Jesus' trial was concluded in one day. Jewish law says: "If a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it [a criminal case] cannot be concluded before the following day" (*Mishna*, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1). This was to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves. Jesus' trial was conducted in private and completed in less than nine hours!

7. Two false witnesses charged Jesus with saying He would destroy the temple made with hands (Mark 14:58); yet He was condemned by the court on another false charge—that of blasphemy. He was condemned on His own

testimony (Luke 22:67-71). But according to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned on his own testimony.

8. The merits of Jesus' defense were not considered. Despite Deuteronomy 13:14, the high priest did not "inquire, and make search, and ask diligently" to see whether Jesus' statement was blasphemous. The law in the *Misha* says: "The judges shall weigh the matter in the sincerity of their conscience" ("Sanhedrin" IV, 5). Instead, the court pronounced sentence instantly and unanimously!

9. Those who would have voted against condemnation were not at Jesus' trial. Joseph of Arimathaea was a member of the court, yet he was not there (Luke 23:50-51). Jesus' opponents had made sure that only those who hated Him would be there.

10. The sentence was pronounced in a place forbidden by law. The trial took place at the high priest's house (Luke 22:54). According to the law, a death sentence could be pronounced only in the court's appointed place.

11. Most of the judges were legally disqualified to try Jesus. Some had bought their way into office, according to Josephus. Also, since they were known enemies of Jesus, Jewish law required that they disqualify themselves so He could be tried by impartial judges.

12. The court illegally switched the charges from blasphemy to treason before Pilate. Jesus' opponents wanted Him killed, but they did not want to do it themselves. So they charged Him with treason (Luke 23:2)—a Roman crime—so the Romans would be responsible for His death. No evidence was presented (John 18:29-30). Pilate, after a brief interview, saw that Jesus was not guilty (John 18:38; 19:4; Matt. 27:18). Fearing the crowd, however, he allowed the crucifixion of an innocent man. Pilate did not even pronounce Him guilty; he merely turned Him over to the soldiers.

What a mockery of justice this trial was! All this illegality, in addition to His crucifixion, Jesus willingly suffered to pay the penalty of our sins in our stead! □

3. Did our Creator become a flesh-and-blood human being by being miraculously conceived in a human woman? John 1:14; Matt. 1:20-21. Why was He made flesh? Heb. 2:9. Is Jesus Christ plainly called "God" and "our Saviour"? Tit. 2:13-14.

COMMENT: The penalty for human sin is death. But the two members of the God Family, composed of spirit, could not die. Neither one of those immortal spirit Beings could pay the penalty of human sin. It was therefore necessary that one of the God Kingdom be born as a human being and *die* to pay the penalty.

The Word, the second member of the God Family, volunteered. He willingly gave up His spirit composition and great glory to be begotten and born as a mortal flesh-and-blood, air-breathing human being.

Since the Word had created all life, His life was worth *infinitely more* than the thousands of millions who have ever lived. Had Jesus Christ been merely a man, His death could have paid the death penalty perhaps for only one other person. But Jesus was also *God* in the flesh!

By emptying Himself of His former power and glory and becoming a human being, Christ became the perfect and complete sacrifice for all sins ever committed by mankind. In no other way could God redeem a vast humanity condemned to the penalty of death.

4. Was the Apostle Paul inspired to write that Christ is "our passover"—our *Savior*—today? I Cor. 5:7.

COMMENT: If the original Passover lambs had not been slain, the Israelites' firstborn would have been killed in Egypt. And unless Christ was killed, we would not have a Savior today.

The Israelites killed their Passover lambs by shedding their blood (Ex. 12:6-7). As these lambs were types of Christ "our passover," and died by bloodshed, so Christ's blood was *also shed* to pay for our sins—our transgressions of God's Law.

5. Does the Bible clearly show that it was necessary for Christ to die by the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of our sins? Heb. 9:22.

COMMENT: Only by Christ's shed blood can we receive the *remission*—forgiveness—of our spiritual sins. (Of course, we know from Acts 2:38 that repentance and baptism are also necessary in connection with His shed blood.)

6. Did Isaiah foretell that Christ would die as a lamb led to the slaughter? Isa. 53:7-8. Does the conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch plainly show that Isaiah was referring to Jesus Christ? Acts 8:32-35.

7. Did Isaiah also prophesy that Christ would die by pouring out His "soul"—His life? Isa. 53:12. Is the life of all flesh in the blood? Lev. 17:11.

COMMENT: Christ died by *bleeding to death*. This is evident from His prophesied sacrificial role, and it is also supported by many ancient Greek manuscripts. Fenton, as well as Moffatt, correctly includes the following sentence as the first part of Matthew 27:50 in his translation: "But another [one of the Roman soldiers] taking a spear pierced His side, when blood and water came out."

Notice also John 19:34. It may be translated "But one of the soldiers with a spear *had* pierced his side . . .", indicating *why* He was already dead (verse 33). For further proof that Christ bled to death, request our free article "Did Christ Die of a Broken Heart?"

Most of us have never before understood Jesus' suffering and death. What a mockery of justice it was! Can you imagine what it would have been like if *you* had been on trial, if you had been treated like Jesus Christ was? Can you imagine the agony involved in being scourged and crucified, and then murdered as He was?

All this suffering Jesus *voluntarily* endured to pay the penalty of our sins *in our stead!*

Just think of the tremendous price Christ paid so we might have our guilty past blotted out, and the slate wiped clean. One of the very members of the *God Family*, in the person of Jesus Christ, paid the penalty for us.

Can you comprehend that our Creator—the One who gives us every breath—suffered and died for every one of us?

Kept by the New Testament Church

1. After Jesus Christ had changed the symbols of the Passover to unleavened bread and wine, and commanded His disciples to keep this New Testament service in memory of His suffering and death, is there indication that God's Church kept the Passover more than 10 years after Christ's crucifixion? Acts 12:4.

COMMENT: The word "Easter" in the Authorized Version is a flagrant mistranslation. The Greek word is *pascha*, which all modern translations correctly render "Passover."

2. Did the Apostle Paul teach New Testament Christians to keep the Passover by partaking of the symbols of unleavened bread and wine as Jesus had done and commanded? I Cor. 11:23-26.

COMMENT: Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, taught baptized Gentiles to keep the Passover! Paul spent much of his time in and near Ephesus,



which was in western Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). History shows that the churches in Asia Minor continued to keep the New Testament Passover long after most other churches had been taken over by a counterfeit Christianity.

The apostles appointed Polycarp over the Church of God in Smyrna, a city near Ephesus. Notice what Eusebius, an early Catholic historian, wrote about him:

“While Anicetus was at the head of the church of Rome [about A.D. 154], Irenaeus relates that Polycarp . . . had a conference with Anicetus on a question concerning the day of the pascal feast [the Passover]. . . . But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and acquainted with many that had seen Christ, but was also appointed by apostles in Asia bishop of the church of Smyrna [Rev. 2:8]. . . . He also was in Rome in the time of Anicetus and caused many to turn away from the . . . heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received from the apostles this one and only system of truth” (*Ecclesiastical History*, book IV, chapter 14, in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1).

While at Rome, Polycarp discussed the Roman practice of observing a pagan festival in place of the Passover. Notice what Eusebius wrote about this meeting: “Neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed [the Passover] with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated” (book V, chapter 24).

The Passover controversy broke out again within 35 years. Victor, bishop of Rome, attempted to excommunicate every church that observed the true Passover!

Eusebius further relates: “But the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates [a later bishop of Ephesus], decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him: ‘We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord’s coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints.’

“‘Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles . . . moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord . . . and Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr. . . . All these observed the fourteenth day . . . the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the

RUINS OF SMYRNA AND EPHEBUS—True Christians in the ancient cities of Smyrna (top) and Ephesus (below), located in western Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), observed the New Testament Passover long after most other congregations had been absorbed by a counterfeit Christianity founded by Simon the sorcerer.

rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates . . . do according to the tradition of my relatives. . . . My relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven [in preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread]' " (book V, chapter 24).

3. Was it prophesied that the Church of God in Smyrna would suffer persecution? Rev. 2:8-10. Who would be their persecutors? Verse 9.

COMMENT: The "synagogue of Satan," composed of those who claimed to be "spiritual Jews"—that is, true Christians—but were not, is the false religion now labeled "Christianity" and founded by the Simon mentioned in Acts 8:9-24. Almighty God calls this counterfeit church the synagogue of Satan the devil!

4. Will the Passover be kept by Christ and others after He establishes the Kingdom of God on earth? Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:15-16. In the meantime, was the Passover to be kept by God's Church as a memorial of Christ's suffering and death? I Cor. 11:25-26.

COMMENT: Jesus commanded His disciples to keep the Passover in *memory* of Him until He returns, when He will keep it again. The apostles did keep it, and God's Church today is *still keeping it exactly as Jesus commanded!*

A Memorial Commanded Once a Year

1. Was the yearly observance of the Old Testament Passover to remind the Israelites of the meaning of this service? Ex. 12:24-27. Is the observance of the New Testament Passover to remind Christians of Christ's sacrifice? I Cor. 11:23-26. Did Jesus institute this ordinance at a certain *time* as an example for us? I Cor. 11:23; Luke 22:14-15.

COMMENT: Christ taught by His example that the New Testament Passover should be taken only *once* a year—on the 14th of Abib, in the evening, after the 13th has ended at sunset.

Christians today should keep the Passover not as often as they please or at whatever time they please, but as often as and at the same time as Christ and the apostles did. The Passover is a *memorial* we are to keep in remembrance of Christ's suffering and death. Memorials of momentous occasions are always observed annually—*once* a year—on the anniversary of the event they commemorate.

As Christ Himself commanded, true Christians today observe the Passover on the evening of the day of His suffering and death. It is the most solemn and sacred occasion of the year—definitely not a time for laughter or socializing. It reaffirms



MEMORIALS of momentous occasions are always observed annually—*once* a year—on the anniversary of the event they commemorate.

year by year "till he come" (I Cor. 11:26) the true Christian's faith in Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

Any other day is not a memorial of Christ's suffering and death, but is merely an invention of men in contradiction to the direct command of Jesus Christ!

The exact date for the Passover, and all of God's annual festivals, varies from year to year on the Roman calendar. The correct dates for all the festivals over the next several years are listed in our free publication *God's Sacred Calendar*.

Taking the Passover Worthily

Before concluding this study of the first step in God's great Master Plan, we need to realize that we could take the New Testament Passover "unworthily"—if we do not heed a *warning* from the Apostle Paul. Let's understand.

1. What did Paul warn the Corinthian Christians regarding their observance of the New Testament Passover? I Cor. 11:27. What should a person do before taking the symbols of the unleavened bread and the wine? Verse 28. What happens if the symbols are taken "unworthily"? Verse 29. Is this why many of them were sick and many had died? Verse 30.

COMMENT: Many today have not understood Paul's warning. Some, feeling they are not "worthy" of Jesus' sacrifice, have concluded they should not observe the Passover. Others have taken the New Testament Passover symbols in a casual or ritualistic manner, not fully understanding their meaning. Both extremes are wrong!

Paul was not saying a Christian must be "worthy" to take the Passover. He wrote that no one should observe the Passover *unworthily*. "Unworthily" does not describe the person—it describes the manner or attitude in which a person eats and drinks the symbols. Most modern translations, such as the Revised Standard Version and the Revised Authorized Version, correctly render "unworthily" as "in an unworthy manner."

Obviously, no one is worthy of Christ's sacrifice. Nevertheless, all true Christians are *commanded* to observe this memorial of our Savior's death for our sins. Notice Paul's command in verse 28: "Let a man *examine* himself. . . ." Why? To conclude he is not worthy, and to refuse to obey? No—the person should examine himself "and *so let him eat* of that bread, and *drink* of that cup."

Before each Passover, every true Christian should examine himself to more fully understand his vital *need* to observe the Passover. A spiritual self-examination will show each Christian that he or she is still a sinner in desperate need of Christ's sacrifice. Observing the Passover is a profound *annual reminder* of our physical and spiritual sins, and a reminder that Christ has paid in full the penalty of those sins, as long as we truly repent of them (I John 1:9).

Paul also wrote that certain of the Corinthian Christians were "not discerning the Lord's body" (I Cor. 11:29). Many of them had not taken the Passover in a worthy manner. They had not fully understood the fact that Christ paid in His body the penalty of their *physical* sins, represented by the broken bread, and thus their illnesses had not been healed. For that reason many of them also had died (verse 30).

Many of these brethren were so lacking in discernment that they thought they were coming together on the evening of the Passover to eat a regular meal. Some even got drunk, says Paul! (verses 20-21, 33-34). Paul therefore had to sternly correct them.

The symbols of the Passover should be taken thoughtfully and with renewed faith—with a *thorough* understanding and comprehension of the *REALITY* these symbols represent!

2. In ancient Israel, who was permitted to partake of the Passover? Ex. 12:48, last part. In New

Testament times, is circumcision of the heart? Rom. 2:29.

COMMENT: In ancient Israel, only Israelites and circumcised Gentiles could take part in the Passover. Today, whether Jew, Israelite or Gentile, one must first become *spiritually circumcised* before he can participate in the New Testament Passover service.

Our previous studies have shown that those who repent, are baptized and have received God's Holy Spirit have become "spiritual Israelites"—have become spiritually circumcised. If a person has not repented—not yet shown faith in Christ as Savior through the symbolism of baptism—he or she is *not able* to take the Passover worthily. Therefore the Passover, unlike any other of God's annual festivals, is limited to baptized members of God's Church.

Do We Stop With the Passover?

Many religions of the Christian-professing world teach that Christ's sacrifice *completed* the plan of salvation—that there is nothing more for us to do but believe.

Nothing could be further from the truth!

Christ's Passover sacrifice only *began* God's Master Plan of salvation. Christ's sacrifice, upon our repentance, paid the penalty of our *past* sins (Rom. 3:24-25). But it does not give us permission to break God's laws with impunity in the future. We must strive to forsake sin—to *put it out of our lives*. That is what the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the next annual festival and step in God's plan, pictures for us.

Many professing Christians claim to "accept" Christ's sacrifice. But God has not applied that sacrifice to them. They are still unrepentant sinners—they refuse to obey Him, claiming His laws are done away.

Christ is not the minister of sin (Gal. 2:17). Not until we repent of sin, believe and begin to obey God can we be forgiven. Christ's sacrifice will be applied only to those who show *by their actions* that they are truly repentant.

If you have not yet begun to participate in God's great plan of salvation and want to do so, then you will want more information regarding baptism so you can keep the New Testament Passover as God commands. You may write or call our office nearest you to learn how to contact a minister of the Worldwide Church of God in your area. Be sure to mention that you have completed Lesson 25 of The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

Supplementary Reading for all our Students



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