

# PASSOVER and Spring Holydays

## Reveal God's Plan of Salvation

Light on the Rock

by Philip Shields

God's family does what Jesus did: they break and eat unleavened bread, drink red wine, and wash feet at the Passover service. They do not celebrate the once-pagan holiday of Easter, but do rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus pictured by God's Festival of the Wavesheaf, the First Fruits of the harvest. This sermon also shows how God's feasts explain His Plan of Salvation;

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**Passover - or Easter? If you're new to this website, I'll briefly explain in a few minutes why I love my Lord – but do NOT, and will not, ever celebrate Easter.** However, we bathe ourselves in the grace of God's Son, our Passover, and *thrill* in God's triumph over Satan and the grave by way of the resurrection of the Son of God, as we remember our risen Lord on Wavesheaf Sunday, a feast of God (**Lev. 23:9-14**). We do remember His death at Passover, and then we *do* remember His resurrection the *way* the Bible says to, and *when* the Bible says to –on Wavesheaf day, not Easter.

Very shortly, many of us on Passover eve will be breaking unleavened bread, drinking a small cup of real red wine, and washing one another's feet – just as our Savior did almost 2,000 years ago in a small upper room in Jerusalem, a short time before He was arrested and then crucified for all of us. As we wash feet, we hold no grudge or malice – even as our Lord washed the feet of even Judas Iscariot. Don't forget that, as you wash feet: Jesus washed even *Judas'* feet, knowing it would be Judas who would betray Him, *sell* Him, for the price of a slave!

*Greetings, brethren, this is Philip Shields of Light on the Rock.* Will the Passover be meaningful to you this year? God's family does what Jesus did: break and eat unleavened bread, drink real red wine, and wash feet at the Passover service.

*Children* may look forward to Easter egg hunts, Halloween and Christmas gifts - but are those celebrations God wants His children participating in? Are they true Christian days of worship, or harmless fun, or ... what are they? What does the Bible say about all this?

**This is the spring Passover season. I recommend you take the time to hear my pre-Passover sermons from 2004 and 2005** – on Spiritually Preparing for the Passover, plus the one on New Light on the Emblems of the Passover. One of my favorites is the one on the connection between Passover and healing. So look back on the website for those sermons, since truth is timeless.

Today I'd like to review what the Bible says about Passover and the spring holydays, and then explain **how God's Spring Holydays begin to reveal the very plan of God's salvation for mankind.** The holydays of the Old Testament were *not just* harvest festivals – but most of the feasts were days that were considered High Days, ANNUAL Sabbaths, HOLY days by God. They had meaning, they had purpose – and they reveal God's plan of salvation.

### WHY NOT EASTER?

Christians the world over celebrate Easter, thinking they are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But any search of the history books will show you that Easter eggs, bunny rabbits, spring

fertility symbols and so on, go way back to Ishtar, the pagan sex goddess. Like Christmas, which celebrates the old Roman pagan Saturnalia, Easter was also given a Christian label, a new garment – but its roots are still clearly there as children look under bushes as they race to find the hidden Easter eggs. And did you know that sunrise worship services in the spring, on Sunday, were going on long before Jesus' death and resurrection? So what's that all about? Hang on... we're about to explain.

You might be tempted to think it doesn't make that much difference, as long as WE know we're worshipping Christ on Easter. That would be fine, except we need to see how any of our human conclusions square with what GOD says in the Bible.

GOD clearly commands His children, you and me, NOT to worship Him the way the heathen worship their gods. **Be turning to Deuteronomy 12.** Remember as we read these verses, that whenever the New Testament says Paul or Christ or Peter preached from the scriptures, the ONLY scriptures available at that time was what we now call the Old Testament! In fact, the "New Testament" canon, or set of approved books, was not even used as a set everywhere until the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D! **So here's what God says about the modern practice of so many churches of taking an old pagan worship site and putting a new coat of paint and a new label on the old pagan building,** so they now think God is pleased that they now worship the true God in the old pagan place, and often in the old pagan CELEBRATION itself!

*Are you so sure God would be pleased with that? Saturnalia becomes Christmas, and the worship of Ishtar – the pagan goddess of sex and fertility – becomes modern-day Easter!* Does it make more sense now why they use sex and fertility symbols – the egg, the rabbit – at Easter, which many naively think is to worship Christ? THINK AGAIN! It's smacking' us in the face with how obviously *pagan* its roots are – and we try to put a Christian connection to it and think that makes it alright?

**Deuteronomy 12:1-4** "These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be **careful to observe** in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, *all the days that you live on the earth.* **2 You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods,** on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. **3 And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. 4 You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things."**

Could God be any plainer? I've been to Rome, for example. Church after church is built on what once were pagan sites. And they're PROUD of that fact. Proud that once pagan worship centers and pagan buildings are now Catholic churches! But what did we just read? Are we going to hear God? But He's not done. Let's continue in verses 29-32:

**Deut 12:29-32** "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, **30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.'** **31 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods;** for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. **32 Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."**

**Jeremiah 10:2** – DO NOT learn the way of the Gentiles.....

**Romans 12:2** – DO NOT be conformed to this world....

So YES – we ARE to absolutely honor Christ for His Passover sacrifice; We *are* to absolutely stand in awe of what Father did as He resurrected our Savior after 3 days and 3 nights in the grave – but we are to honor and stand in awe *the Bible way*, and not how pagans worshiped their gods.

Paul even chastises the Corinthian brethren for – too often – trying to drink of the cup of God AND the cup of demons. He says not to do it. (**1 Cor. 10:21**). We even talked about this concept in the sermon on the “Tabernacle of David” series – that God did not want them honoring Him on a wooden cart like the pagans did.

Having said all that, there ARE festivals – festivals of GOD we are to keep. In fact we are not just to keep them, but be sure to be properly and spiritually prepared for the Passover. But NOWHERE will you find God telling His family to keep Easter! Please turn to Leviticus 23.

The holydays of God are listed in Leviticus 23 and mentioned other places. Note *whose* holydays these are:

**Leviticus 23:1-4** “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The *feasts of the LORD*, which you shall proclaim to be *holy convocations*, **these are My feasts**.”

[Did you hear that? “**These are MY feasts**” – not the Jews’ feasts. So now the first holyday that is mentioned is the one that comes up every week, the Sabbath, on Saturday, the 7<sup>th</sup> day.]

'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. 4 '**These are the *feasts of the LORD*, holy convocations** which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.”

The rest of Leviticus 23 goes on to discuss in detail each of the holydays of God, in sequence.

### **Even the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH KEPT GOD'S FESTIVALS**

But you say – surely all those Old Testament festivals were done away with? It is not the purpose of *this* sermon to go in depth into proving we are still to keep the holydays and God's feasts in the NEW Testament, except for a few brief comments and scriptures, which really should be enough.

- there is NO mention of Easter in the Bible except the MIStranslation of the Greek in the King James version, for Passover, in **Acts 12:3-4**. Most modern translations correct the KJV error.
- The Bible is clear that the feasts, such as the Feast of Tabernacles, will be kept in Christ's Millennial reign on earth (**Zechariah 14:16**). Why, if they've been done away with?
- It's also clear the **early Corinthian church, largely a Gentile church – kept the Passover, and the Days of Unleavened Bread**, long after Christ's death and resurrection. There is NO mention that they kept Easter, however, because of course they didn't!

Of course we know the early Christians also kept **PENTECOST** – called the Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament – in **Acts 2**. The **Day of Atonement** is referred to as “the Fast” in **Acts 27:9**, to show it was late in the season. Fair enough, that verse doesn't prove they kept it, but at least it is mentioned. Paul says –clearly shown in the KJV and NKJV – that he had to be in Jerusalem to **observe, to keep, the Feast** that was coming up (**Acts 18:21**). That phrase is omitted in the newer translations which use other texts than the NKJV and KJV do, by the way.

**For example, in 1 Cor. 5:6-8, Paul urges the Gentile Corinthians to remember the spiritual POINT of what they would be doing during the Days of Unleavened Bread:**

**1 Corinthians 5:6-8** “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little **leaven** leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore **purge out the old leaven**, that you may be a **new lump**, since you *truly are unleavened*. For indeed **Christ, our Passover**, was sacrificed for us. 8 ***Therefore let us keep the feast***, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Then again in **1 Cor. 11:17-34**, Paul once again gives explicit instructions on how to properly keep the Passover or Lord's Supper, with the new emblems of the bread and wine. Be sure to hear my sermon last year on “New Insight into the Passover Emblems”.

*NOTE THAT PAUL NEVER ONCE MENTIONS EASTER.* OF COURSE Paul teaches and glories in the resurrection (**1 Cor. 15**) of Christ, and *we do too*, but we *must not* mix and match God's commanded ways to worship Him with the way pagans worship THEIR gods.

- We DO believe in the resurrection of Jesus – and that is the meaning behind the Wavesheaf festival of First Fruits.

So if you're new to this website, and you have little exposure to the Feasts of God – which many of us still keep – then don't feel like I'm attacking you or your beliefs. *I'm not*. Just smile and thank God that He's showing you some truth that may be new to you, but is absolutely Biblical.

### **WHEN WAS JESUS RESURRECTED?**

Ready for another surprise? The tomb where they had placed Christ's body was indeed already empty BY Sunday morning, *before* or around sunrise, as you will see. So why do we observe Easter sunrise services? Please consider these things, compared to what you've always thought perhaps?

- **the only proof of Jesus' Messiahship that He gave was that He would be 3 days and 3 nights in the earth and then resurrected.** You cannot squeeze 72 hours into a Friday night burial and an early Sunday resurrection.

**Matthew 12:39-40** “But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and **no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah**. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will ***the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.***”

According to Jesus' own words, if He was not 3 days AND 3 nights in the ground – He could not be the Messiah. But Jesus WAS 3 days and 3 nights in the ground.

**Here's what was going on:**

- Jesus observes the Last Supper, HIS Passover meal, on the eve of the 14<sup>th</sup> of the Hebrew 1<sup>st</sup> month Nisan or Abib, one *night before the majority of the Jews of His day did*.
- As the Lamb of God, **Jesus is crucified in the day portion of the 14<sup>th</sup>**, and is speared to death at 3 pm. (**John 19:34-37**). That's when GOD killed His Lamb – at 3 pm on the 14<sup>th</sup>, just as thousands of innocent lambs *were* being sacrificed by priests at the temple and then given to the head of household to take home and prepare for their Seder.
- **that evening after Christ died, the eve of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib, was the beginning of the first holyday of Unleavened Bread**; commemorating when Israel came out of Egypt with joy and celebration. However, *this* night, *this* time, which we call the “Night to be Much Observed”, was not a very happy night as the disciples had just buried their Champion, Jesus! Have you considered that? That particular year, their Night to be Observant was very sad and solemn.
- The Jews considered the day before *any* Sabbath – whether the weekly Sabbath or the holydays of God which were called annual Sabbaths, or High days – the day before these holydays was called “**the Preparation Day**”. So Friday was a preparation day because of the weekly Sabbath, but the day before *any* of the holydays was also a “Preparation Day”.

THIS is the reason everyone thinks Jesus was buried Friday night, because scripture clearly says that the Sabbath was about to begin – and most people ASSUME that means Saturday. However, let's read it carefully. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> holyday was about to start, and since the annual holydays could fall on any day of the week, the day Christ was buried could have been a Wednesday or any other day of the week. In fact, that year, it was like 2006, it WAS a Wednesday when He was on the cross. THAT was a preparation day. Thursday was the High Day – the first day of Unleavened Bread.

- Jesus was put into the tomb *just before* sunset, and just before what was a “HIGH DAY”, which was the term referring to an *annual* holyday, *not* the weekly Sabbath. An annual holyday *could fall on any day of the week*, not just Saturday. **That annual high day that was referring to was the FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Hebrew first month of Nisan or Abib.** The day before any weekly Sabbath, OR any annual Sabbath – was called the Preparation Day. The Preparation Day for the weekly sabbath was Friday. But that term does not always mean Friday, IF it's a preparation day for an *annual* High Day, which we're clearly told it was.

I believe in the year Jesus actually died, that was a *Wednesday* night. Passover day was Wednesday, that year, in other words. Just as Jesus said, 3 days and 3 nights later, He would be resurrected at exactly the same moment in the day He was earlier placed into the tomb – just before Sunset, on a Saturday night.

As we read these verses, understand that days began and ended at sunset. So when we read about it being just before the annual Sabbath, what the writer is saying is that it was just before sundown. The term “evening” could refer to the late afternoon before- OR any time up to and after - sunset.

**John 19:31** “Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (*for that Sabbath was a high day*), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

John takes pains to make sure we grasp that the Sabbath in question was not Saturday, but an annual Sabbath, an annual "high day", which could fall on *any* day of the week – and so could the Preparation Day.

**Luke 23:50-54** "Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. **54 *That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.*** [so it was just before sunset on an ANNUAL Sabbath – not the weekly Sabbath!]

If our calculations are correct, and if Jesus died on a Wednesday – placed in the tomb on Wednesday late afternoon as the sun was about to set – 3 days and 3 nights later would place it at Saturday night, as the weekly sabbath ended, and as Sunday was beginning.

***SO, WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION – and its TIE TO THE WAVESHEAF FEAST?***

- But you say scripture says He was resurrected on Sunday, at sunrise? Is that *really* what it says? When you understand the Wavesheaf festival, you'll understand exactly what Jesus did. If this is new to any of you, I just ask that you carefully study it with your own eyes and ask God to show you the truth. If you feel I'm in serious error, write to me. I'll listen and perhaps we can discuss your take on this. But let's use the Bible as our standard.
  - God the Father resurrected His Son as the sun was setting, Saturday night. That was also when the first sheaf the spring barley harvest was cut loose from the earth! The first of the FIRST FRUITS – which depicted our Savior – was set apart, and then cut loose of the earth at sundown on Saturday. (see **Leviticus 23:9-14**).

Now let's read the Old Testament shadow of the REALITY – of the resurrection of Jesus:

**Leviticus 23:9-11** "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 **He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD**, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it."

The Israelites could not begin their harvest until the first wavesheaf had been selected, cut loose on Saturday night, and then waved up to God on Sunday morning during the days of Unleavened Bread. Neither does God's spiritual harvest begin until Christ is resurrected! He is the FIRSTborn, the first of the first fruits.

- When the women came to the tomb on Sunday morning, notice what it says about the time of day and the condition of the tomb: ***it was already EMPTY!*** So it actually doesn't tell us exactly when Jesus was bodily resurrected! Keep in mind that it gets light about a half hour BEFORE sunrise! But if the tomb is already empty, then Jesus was resurrected some time before the women arrived! But the Bible doesn't clearly say exactly when – except Jesus' words that He would be in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights.

**Mark 16:2** does say the women came early, right at sunrise – but they found the tomb already empty.

**Matthew 28:1** says “as the first day of the week *began to dawn...*

**John 20:1** “Now the first day of the week *Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark*, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.”

So the point is: by early Sunday morning, while it was **STILL DARK, before sunrise**, JESUS HAD ALREADY RISEN. It doesn't say He was resurrected at sunrise, but *by* sunrise – He had sometime before that, already been resurrected. Why? Because He was placed in the tomb just before sunset, *He had to be resurrected also just before sunset, or the way I read Jesus' words – He couldn't have been our Savior. It was the only sign He gave of being the Messiah.*

### GOD'S HOLYDAYS AND FEASTS REVEAL HIS PLAN OF SALVATION

I hope you'll listen to the sermon on the website, in **April 2004, about “Healing and it's connection to Passover”**. It goes in depth into attitudes, self-searching, forgiveness, and so much more. Please be sure you look it over. We have the transcript now available as well.

Now let's start a closer look at how God's holydays reveal His plan of salvation. God's mysteries are revealed to those who have His mind.

God the Father calls His children – and leads them to Christ; He reveals the Savior to us when we're called. Then Jesus in turn, through the Holy Spirit, reveals to us a deeper intimacy with God our Father. I went through that in detail in the recent sermon “That I May Know Him”. So the Holydays reveal Christ, His Body, and our coming ever closer to the glory of God and into His presence. They reveal the prophetic events that reveal the redemption we have in Christ. This should be good reason to fully understand the holydays – and as I believe, to worship God on those days.

The substance of the Sabbath day, the reality of the holydays and feasts – all point to Christ (**Col. 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1**). We can better understand our calling, our relationship, and even better understand Christ Himself as we better understand these holydays.

*God WANTS His children to understand His Plan, but it must be revealed:*

**1 Corinthians 2:7-12** “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

10 **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? **Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”**

**The holydays of God, listed in Leviticus 23, start in the Spring** – with new growth, symbolizing the newness we have in Christ; new creation, new growth. That makes far more sense than starting a new year in the dead of winter!

**The first month of the Hebrew calendar is called Abib, or Aviv** (like the city, Tel Aviv – the mound of Aviv). It corresponds usually to our March –April. Since the Hebrew calendar is lunar, it does not correspond to our solar year very well and the dates don't appear as fixed dates to us, using a solar calendar. GOD DECREED that the first month of the year is Abib – NOT Rosh Hashana, not the fall. Tradition has it that Adam was created on what is now the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the Hebrew 7<sup>th</sup> Month.

**One more thing: God's days start and end at around sunset or sundown.**

**Exodus 12:1-2** “Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2 ***"This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."***

**Deuteronomy 16:1** ***"Observe*** the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.”

The stage of growth could be *observed* – and then you knew it was ready to be the first month. If there was snow on the ground, or the barley was not up far enough along to be able to have a wavesheaf by the middle of the first month, then an extra month was put in – a 13<sup>th</sup> month – in order to keep the calendar in line with the seasons.

After the Jewish exile, the Jews seemed to have changed its name to Nisan, more a Babylonian name (see **Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 3:7**). Aviv has to do with a certain stage of growth especially of the barley plant. Soon after the Aviv stage, the plant would be able to be harvested and presented to God as an offering – or it could be ground into flour and used for baking.

The Israelites had been in Egypt for a long time and over time had become slaves. God was about to redeem them from slavery. **Egypt becomes a type of sin, that has a hold on us**, and claims us – for we have all sinned and the wages of sin is death. **So in the Passover, God delivers the 10<sup>th</sup> plague against Egypt.** *All the plagues were designed to be direct hits against the gods of Egypt* – and that also was a witness to the Israelites that there is no *real* god other than the *one* true God of Israel, the Creator, YHWH, the Eternal. (See **Exodus 12:12**).

The Egyptians worshiped the Nile – and it was struck as blood. *Sobek* was their creator-god, shaped like a crocodile in the Nile. They worshiped animals and they were struck with hail, disease and so forth. *Heket* was their primordial goddess that was frog-like. *Aton*, the sun god, and *Khepri* – the rising sun – were struck in the plague of darkness. *Apis*, the bull god; *Horus* – the sky god who was depicted as a falcon – all of these were struck by the 9 previous plagues. They easily had 30 or more gods they worshiped. The Nile blood, plagues of frogs, lice, biting flies, livestock diseased, boils, hail, locusts, darkness – all hit Egypt where they were proud. The locusts and hail destroyed Egypt's reputation as the Bread Basket of the World at that time, for example.

***But the last plague – the Death angel striking every living first born of man and beast -- was the grand finale***, for every living thing got hit again. God also struck the educated leaders of Egypt. The first born males were the leaders, the elders, the chiefs of industry, military leaders – and in the Passover plague, God crushes their infrastructure!



And this is where we get the name PASS-OVER. The Israelites were to kill a yearling lamb without blemish or fault, smear its blood at the entrance to their homes (**Ex. 12:7**), above the doorway and on the sides - - and the death angel would see the blood – and **PASS OVER** that house (**Exodus 12:13**).

God will pass over your house too, and find you “not guilty”- - if He sees the blood of the Lamb over you as well. That’s why we have to accept Jesus as our Savior and acknowledge His blood given for us. Then God will also PASS-OVER our sins as well, and we’ll be declared forgiven.

### **WERE GOD’S ANNUAL HOLYDAYS OBSERVED BEFORE the EXODUS?**

**Were the annual holydays observed as holydays before the Exodus? I know more and more are teaching that they were. I don’t agree. Having said that, it seems likely that certain key events happened on the exact dates** as what became the holydays, but I don’t believe we can say there is any scriptural evidence that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob kept the Feast of Tabernacles, or Passover, or Pentecost.

**We know that God made a covenant with Abraham at the EXACT TIME** the Israelites would be marching out of Egypt, and at the exact time Jesus would be entombed after His crucifixion. (**Genesis 15; Exodus 12:42**). But that still doesn’t say the patriarchs kept each and every holyday, *as a holyday!*

Here’s one reason I say that? GOD says the reason for keeping the Passover is that it REMEMBERS when the Death Angel PASSED OVER them in Egypt – not something that was rooted way before then. Perhaps indeed Abraham would have sacrificed Isaac on what became Passover day – but we don’t know that for sure. And if it was that case, it really was a picture for CHRIST ON CALVARY. But that still doesn’t prove that Abraham, or Enoch or Noah kept the annual holydays.

Here’s the reason GOD said the Israelites were to give when asked why they kept the Passover. And as you read this, remember OUR reason today is the REALITY that the shadows pointed to: CHRIST ON THE CROSS, even more so than coming out of Egypt. As we’re about to read, we keep these days “because of what the LORD did for me...”

**Ex 12:25-27** “It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. 26 **And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'** 27 **that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt** when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.” So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.”

**Ex 13:7-8** “Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. 8 **And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.'**

*Just as – back in Egypt – just as the lamb’s blood smeared on the door post and lintel saved the Israelites, so now the blood of the Lamb of God saves US from the death angel. THOSE LAMBS and young goats being sacrificed in Egypt on Passover, pictured the REAL LAMB, the Lamb of God, the firstborn of God, who died for us. God now sees the blood – and passes over OUR sins and forgives us, and we don’t have to die for our own sins.*

Now back to the question of whether these days were observed as holydays before the Exodus: There is nothing in those verses, from God, that even hint, that Passover was about something prior to Egypt. The Passover was God's FIRST feast, and it was clearly given as a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt and a picture of the coming Lamb of God.

### **Back to the PASSOVER**

**On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the Abib (Ex. 12:3-6)**, the families selected and set apart a lamb or kid in its first year, for the Passover meal; just as Jesus was set apart by God, actually from before the foundation of the earth. It also corresponds to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem that you can read about in **John 12:1, 12-16**. There they cut down palm branches, as they would for a hero, and sang Hosannas (meaning "Save now"). The Jews probably were also chanting or singing Psalms 115-118, which they commonly did at Passover.

The reason for selecting the lamb ahead of time was to be sure it was in perfect shape, **but to also allow the family to make the lamb their own; to identify with it**. Some families had to buy a lamb, so this allowed them time to come to personally know and love this creature. Jesus is called "the Lamb of God" – and God the Father knew Him from the beginning (**John 1:1-3**).

Then on the 14<sup>th</sup>, at twilight, the lamb was sacrificed by the entire congregation (we all killed Christ), and its blood – in the original Passover – was wiped on to the lintel and doorposts of the home, signifying they had come under the blood of the Lamb (**Ex. 12:6-8**) – and then that night they were to eat the whole **roasted lamb** or young goat. It is called "the Lord's Passover" – **Exodus 12:11** – not "the Jews' Passover", at least not here in Exodus when they were keeping the Passover the way God said to do it. By roasting it, they could cook it whole, without breaking any of its bones – just as Christ had no bones broken either (**John 19:36**).

They would eat it haste, standing up, with rod in hand. Slaves were at the ready; they could not eat in a relaxed way. By the time of Jesus, they did not eat it standing up but they were clearly reclining – signifying that they were no longer slaves.

You had to be part of the covenant people to eat of this Passover (Ex. 12:43-45). Not any of the Passover lamb was to be left overnight.

AFTER the Passover supper which Jesus had told His disciples to go prepare, Jesus explained the **meaning behind the symbols and emblems**: the cup of wine, the unleavened bread – and then He added something new: the footwashing. You can read of all this in Matthew 26:26-29; John 13:1-15; and other places. He pointed out **that the bread was His one bread**, symbolizing unity in Him and taking Him into us daily as we eat of His word, the Bible. It also shows His life given up for us, even broken for us (**1 Cor. 11:24; Matt. 26:26**). The matzah at Passover has stripes on it, and its pierced through with holes – just as Jesus was pierced, and by His stripes we are healed.

The wine now stands for His blood – shed for our sins (**Matt. 26:27-29; 1 Cor. 11:25**). The footwashing shows the way of humility, service – and accepting one another in unity (**John 13:1-17**).

The Passover – on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib, was a FEAST day, but not a holyday. It was the day to get ready for the holyday, to put out all leavening from your home.

There is much discussion as to *when* the Israelites killed their lambs and goats – was it the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup>, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> ----- or was it in the late afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>? I'm sure the debate will continue until Christ returns and tells us exactly what is right.

**This much I do know:**

- Jesus kept His last Passover one night before most of the Jews did, on the eve of the 14<sup>th</sup>. So that is when I wash feet and break bread and drink of the cup.
- God sacrificed HIS Lamb on daylight portion of the 14<sup>th</sup>, in the afternoon, at 3 pm, at the time the Pharisees at that time called “between the evenings” (their first evening was as the sun began its descent at noon to 3 pm, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> evening was 3 pm to dark). Would God have sacrificed HIS Lamb – remember Jesus is what all those lambs pictured – at the wrong time?

**In Egypt, 3500 years ago, every household found someone in their home dead! Except the Israelites.** This is when Egypt had finally had enough! This is when they finally let Israel go! Exodus 12 explains all that in detail and I recommend you read the whole chapter. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night (Ex. 12:31), and the people pushed them out (v. 33), and they baked unleavened bread because they didn't have time to let the bread rise (v. 39).

**So every year, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, we gather and we replicate what Jesus did in John 13 and Matthew 26. It should not, in my view, be like a funeral,** though we ARE remembering what Jesus did for us and how He died for us. But we ALSO remember HE GAINED THE VICTORY over sin and rose again – so I don't go all morbid and down in the dumps like most seem to! It should be solemn, but not a funeral.

We should be, right now, examining ourselves so we take of the cup and the bread in a worthy manner – meaning we have come to deeply appreciate what God and His Son have done for us. The examination of self should be serious – but we're not looking for perfection; that is why we need our Savior. Let each one examine himself and so LET HIM TAKE the cup, it says in 1 Cor. 11. Part of the examination also is to assess how we view the BODY of Christ. My sermon on Passover-and it's connection to healing – goes in depth on that. We're too divided right now. Too many splinter groups. **Too much “we're better than you” attitudes going on – rather than each one esteeming others better than ourselves, as we're told.** And GOD tells us, that because of that, there is a lot of unhealed sickness in the body of Christ. Read it for yourself in 1 Cor. 11.

So we come and deeply appreciate the bread and wine, and then we wash one another's feet, to remember the MASTER ALREADY HAS washed my brother's and sister's feet; when I wash feet it's a way of showing I love, accept, forgive and honor my brother – and then I get in a chair and have him wash me, accept me, forgive me as well. ***And don't forget: Master washed Judas' feet!***

**But it should not be like a funeral!** Jesus' Passover was solemn – but there was interaction going on. Conversation was going on. It was a meal. As the meal was ending, Jesus inaugurated the footwashing and explained that now the wine was the NEW COVENANT in His blood, and the broken unleavened bread was his broken body given for us. By the way, the original Passover was done by each household. I see no reason why we have to all gather in one big location and have one minister lead the whole thing. *That was not the way Jesus did it, it was not the way the Israelites did it.* Nowadays, my favorite Passovers are kept in one's home, after a meal with a small group of

people, then with 2-3 people sharing the reading of the Passover scriptures and Jesus' final message in John 13 -17. The final hymn should not be one of woe and gloom – but of victory over sin.

The CORE meaning of the Passover is CHRIST, the Lamb of God. Even in the Old Testament, the lamb was the central point of the Passover, and “the Passover” and the Passover lamb became synonymous.

**Then comes the night to be much observed and the days of unleavened bread.**

**Also, before the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib, we have put out all leaven from our homes (Ex. 12:14-20),** picturing our TOTAL rejection of sin, putting sin out of our lives, totally and completely, pictured by the 7 days in the days of Unleavened bread. We now CONSECRATE our lives to God, to HOLINESS, to sincerity. The Passover is the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the days of Unleavened Bread are the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup>.

- Yes, deleaven. We certainly do. **But I'm going to ask you to spend – this year – TWICE as much on your SPIRITUAL house cleaning than on your physical house cleaning!** The physical is more tangible, it's easier, more visible – and so we can feel good about getting rid of all the leaven before the spring holydays, but then be so tuckered out by all that extra work, that we find we didn't do enough *SPIRITUAL HOUSE CLEANING! I REALLY FEEL we have emphasized the physical way too much, to the DETRIMENT of the spiritual. I'll get flak for saying that, but I stick to it. \*\*I believe the New Covenant emphasizes the SPIRITUAL POINT of the physical things we do.* The original command was to take one day to put out leaven. Nowadays I know people who put a week or more into it. To me, that's being Pharisaical and legalistic.
- Paul told the Corinthians that they were UNLEAVENED – BUT, the only way they could really have been unleavened was physically, when you realize how many spiritual problems he addresses. Then he goes on to say how they were SPIRITUALLY PUFFED UP. They had PHYSICALLY deleavened, and probably very well, but MISSED THE POINT: which was to SPIRITUALLY examine ourselves.
- Remember this too: we can't put leaven out of ourselves. Christ has to die for us –FIRST -- and *that* is what makes us unleavened, a new creature, a new lump, as it were. You can't take leaven out of a lump of bread. You have to discard it and start with a new unleavened lump. **Passover has to happen before Unleavened Bread can happen** – otherwise it's like trying to make ourselves righteous without God doing it. *It can't be done by our own efforts – or that's SELF-righteousness.* Passover is just *one* day before the days of Unleavened bread.

**But the 3 main things about the 7 days of Unleavened Bread:**

- **no leaven** was to be eaten or found in ones' homes (Ex. 12:14-20; 13:6-8; 23:15; Lev. 23:6)
- the 1<sup>st</sup> and last days were **holy days** (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:7-8; Num. 28:25; Deut. 16:8).
- special sacrifices were offered during each day of the Feast (Lev. 23:8; Num. 28:19-24), and we don't do this 3<sup>rd</sup> rule today since Christ's sacrifice stopped animal sacrifices.

**The 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib and the 21<sup>st</sup> of Abib, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days of Unleavened Bread, are to be holy days, holy sabbaths (Exodus 12:15-16; Leviticus 23:5-8).**

Also remember again, Israel came out of Egypt at the precise moment of the **covenant vision and promises to Abraham in Genesis 15**.

**THE NIGHT OF VIGILS, THE NIGHT TO BE MUCH OBSERVED – begins the 7 day  
FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

The 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of Abib begins the Days of Unleavened Bread for 7 days. The 1<sup>st</sup> day of Unleavened bread – the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month – and the 7<sup>th</sup> day of unleavened bread (the 21<sup>st</sup> day of Abib) were annual holy days. The Jews often lumped Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread into one 8 day period – sometimes calling the whole period “the Passover” and sometimes calling all of it “The Days of Unleavened Bread” (see **Luke 22:1, 7**).

Remembering that days begin with sundown, we can see that Israel came out of Egypt on the eve of the 15<sup>th</sup>, at night (**Deut 16:1**), and it was a holy day. The Bible refers to that night as “the night to be much observed” (**Ex. 12:42**) in the KJV – or more correctly, “the night to be very Observant”, on your guard, on your watch, vigilant. It is incorrect to call it “the night to be much remembered.”

The time they came out of Egypt was the day AFTER they kept the Passover (and again, remember days start and end at sundown), and it was by NIGHT (Deut. 16:1).

**Numbers 33:3-4** “They departed from Rameses in the first month, **on the fifteenth day** of the first month; **on the day after the Passover** the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. 4 For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.”

Now let's read more scriptures and see what they mean for us today. The Jews today – and most books which discuss the holydays – put the Passover and Night to be Observed, as one and the same. But Jesus clearly kept His Passover one night before the Jews' Night to be Observed, or before their Passover.

**Ex 12:40-42** “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the **selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 42 It is **a night to be much observed** unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.” –KJV

**NKJV – v. 42- “a night of solemn observance”**

**NIV** says of verse 42: “Because **the LORD kept vigil that night** to bring them out of Egypt, on this night **all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD** for the generations to come.”

This was the night GOD brought them out of Egypt, watched their back, kept a vigil up for Israel, and we REMEMBER that today by getting together to honor the way God has brought us OUT of SIN, and REDEEMED us, and made us FREE from sin, free from Satan's grasp. We don't have a party – no, we come together to “honor the Eternal” for what He has done for us.

***It took the Passover to break Egypt's stranglehold. It takes the REAL PASSOVER of our LORD on Calvary, to break the back of sin.***

If you would **review the messages I gave in April 2005 – “Fresh Look at Passover Emblems”** and the one on “Spiritually Preparing for Passover”, you’ll have a lot of info I don’t have time to repeat today.

**Then began 7 days of Unleavened Bread – picturing this:**

*When we accept Jesus as our Savior, our life must now change.* We have put out the old leaven of sin, of malice, of evil – and we now live “a new creation” life demonstrative of sincerity and truth as a way of life, though we sometimes still stumble in sin. Leaven is used often as a type of sin – something that spreads and affects everything it touches. Leaven puffs bread up – a symbol of vanity, pride, ego. UNleavened bread is not puffed up, is not airy. What you see is what you get with unleavened bread.

Passover is what really destroys sin. After we accept the Passover, we demonstrate that new life by rejecting sin in our lives, pictured by completely putting leaven out of our homes for 7 days.

**How all this pictures Christ and the plan of salvation:**

- Jesus is the Lamb of God (**John 1:29**), and our Passover (**1 Cor. 5:7**).
- Paul used the days of Unleavened Bread, which it sounds like the Corinthians were keeping, to remind them of the need to put out flagrant sin and flagrant sinners who sin as a way of life – referring to the flagrant adulterer in their midst.

**1 Corinthians 5:6-8** “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** 7 **Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump,** since you *truly are unleavened*. For indeed **Christ, our Passover**, was sacrificed for us. 8 **Therefore let us keep the feast,** not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but *with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*”

As we eat unleavened bread, remember its *point* – to be sincere, truthful, righteous, letting the risen Christ live in you, for after all HE is what the Unleavened bread pictures! We now must walk as He walked, if we claim to know Him, or else we’re just liars (**1 John 2:3-6**). The life we now live is Christ – the unleavened bread of God – in us. We have a commitment to obey, to live the life of someone who is in Christ. As we eat the broken unleavened bread, we remember we must take in Christ every day, in Bible study and prayer. Our life is now lived for HIM. Jesus is the bread of God from heaven (**John 6:48-51**), of which, if we partake, we shall have everlasting life.

In my sermon on “*Emblems of the Passover*” – April 2005 – I go into much detail about the bread, the wine, the cup, the footwashing. PLEASE be sure to check that sermon out.

**FINALLY, during the days of unleavened bread, there is another FEAST DAY that most of the groups I know about don’t really observe, but God says we should. It’s not a holy day, but it is a FEAST day. Let’s read it. It’s the FEAST OF GOD that *correctly* celebrates the RISEN CHRIST and His resurrection! NOT pagan EASTER dressed up in Christianity – but the WAVESHEAF FEAST. YES, we SHOULD at least have special prayers and thanksgiving on this feast day, even though it’s not a sabbath day of rest.**

**Without the resurrection, we have no hope.** Without Christ resurrected, our faith is in vain, our hope is empty, and Paul says we are to be most pitied, of all men. (**1 Corinthians 15:14-19**)

**FEAST OF FIRST FRUITS/WAVESHEAF**

**Leviticus 23:9-11** “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall **bring a sheaf of the firstfruits** of your harvest to the priest. 11 He shall **wave the sheaf before the LORD**, *to be accepted on your behalf*; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.”

After that, it talks about sacrifices that go with the day, but we know in the new covenant we do not offer literal animal sacrifices because Jesus once and for all did away with that.

Originally, I believe it was a literal sheaf. *By the time of Christ*, a sheaf from standing harvest of barley was brought to the priest Saturday at sundown, then it was crushed and sifted during the night, and then early Sunday morning during the days of Unleavened Bread it was presented, or waved, to God as an offering and then the sheaf or flour was lowered back down to earth again.

***What did Jesus tell Mary Magdalene, as she was clinging to Him that early Wavesheaf Sunday morning? We'll pick up the story in John 20:14.***

**John 20:14-17** “Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

***17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"***

So just as the FIRST sheaf of the spring barley harvest was preselected, then cut loose on Saturday night, the high priest then waived – or raised – this sheaf up to heaven on the first day of the week during the days of Unleavened Bread, and then the sheaf was lowered again – all on the same day. Keep that in mind. On the SAME day, still Sunday – JESUS returns BACK to earth, and this time appearing to the frightened disciples.

But don't forget part of the reason for this, from the Old Testament: this was done ***“to be accepted on your behalf.” I'll explore that more fully when I do the sermon on what it really means to pray “in Jesus' name”. Brethren, it is SO RICH with meaning!***

**John 20:19-20** “Then, *the same day at evening, being the first day of the week*, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, *for fear of the Jews*, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”

They were not assembled having a church service on Sunday – as many claim – but were assembled in a locked room “for fear of the Jews”. They were in fear for their lives!

SO the wavesheaf shows us that there is RESURRECTION ahead for ALL of us... for if Christ is risen, so shall we be. If He wasn't, neither will we be. ***But Jesus is the ultimate firstfruits, the point***

*of wavesheaf Sunday.* The “feast of Firstfruits” refers to the Wavesheaf feast, not Pentecost. Pentecost was the feast day called “the Feast of WEEKS” – 50 days *after* Wavesheaf. Let’s read confirmation of what and Who the first wavesheaf represented:

**1 Corinthians 15:20-24** “But **now Christ is risen from the dead**, and *has become the firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even **so in Christ all shall be made alive.** 23 **But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.** 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

Remember the part about the wavesheaf’s purpose was to be “*accepted in your behalf*”? Now that we become a part of the body of Christ, if HE is the firstfruits, **WE ALSO, in Christ, become a type of firstfruits.** While we’re “in Christ”, if *He* is holy, so are we – *if* we are part of His body, “in Him”.

**Romans 11:16** “For if the **firstfruit** [Christ] is holy, the lump [that’s us] is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

**James 1:18** Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that **we** might be a kind of **firstfruits** of His creatures.

***The Wavesheaf festival was what had to happen before the REST of the harvest could begin.***

First the barley harvest, then the spring wheat. 50 days after the wavesheaf was offered, was the FEAST OF WEEKS – or feast of Pentecost – which is also rich in meaning, but that’s for another sermon.

Christ is the FIRST FRUITS of God’s plan of salvation, and then the rest of us are called and able to join the BODY of Christ. First the body has to be born into glory – and that is Christ, and then the rest of us, and then eventually most of the rest of the world will be saved, in their time. But that’s for another sermon.

All for now brethren . . . study the scriptures, and have a meaningful spring Holydays of God. This is Philip Shields, your brother in Christ until next time. May God be with you and may we deeply appreciate the meaning of God’s spring holydays.

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