

Chapter IX

LESSONS FROM CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

To this point in our studies we have considered Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau and various others who were associated with them, as well as Haman and Mordecai. The historical events surrounding their lives have revealed much concerning the relationship between the firstborn and the second-born. They have given us vital information about the relationship between these two, which relates spiritually to the relationship between the flesh and the Spirit. Even so we shall not continue to delve into their lives, or the lives of their immediate families, even though there is much more recorded in Scripture concerning them. Our purpose shall be better served by pressing forward to one of ten events which provided the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

This was the sacrifice and application of the blood of the passover lamb. Egypt is presented in Scripture as a type of this world, so the judgment of the firstborn in Egypt and the deliverance of the Jews by the blood of the Passover lamb represents to us the judgment of the sins

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of this world in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. This is confirmed by a statement of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, when he wrote, *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.*

The blood of the Passover lamb was used of God to make a distinction between the firstborn in Israel and the firstborn in Egypt:

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:1-13)

In addition to revealing to the Corinthians that Christ is our Passover, the apostle Paul also revealed Israel to be the believer's example. Consequently everything that happened to Israel, both positively and negatively, is for the believer's admonition and instruction. This means the Passover and subsequent events in the history of Israel are of extreme importance to the believer's

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spiritual understanding and growth.

The distinction God made between Israel and Egypt was not made because of a difference in conduct between the Jews and the Egyptians, but it was made because of the elective purpose of God, which was put into effect through redemption:

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. (Exodus 13:15)

In the New Testament redemption in Jesus Christ is referred to as *regeneration* and regeneration is referred to as a new birth, which, literally, is *a birth from above*. Thus there are two births which can be experienced by the human family: a natural birth and a spiritual birth. The natural birth produces children of this world who are spiritually dead because of their relationship with Adam. Conversely the spiritual birth produces children of God, who are spiritually alive because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Our Lord spoke of this birth to Nicodemus, who came to Him by night and said:

Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? (John 3:2-9)

Even though Nicodemus was a religious man, a Pharisee, and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin council, he did not understand our Lord. This was evidenced by his question: *How can*

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these things be? Nicodemus could not understand what Jesus said, because the natural mind does not understand or receive spiritual truth. Even though he was religious, he was unsaved, and the unsaved natural mind is dead to spiritual truth. The only life which the natural man has is his natural life and the only nature which he can manifest is the Adamic nature, which is in rebellion against God and *is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it be.* Consequently *there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Under the terms of God's promise to Israel the blood of the Passover lamb was to be applied to the door post and lintels of the houses at the time of the sacrifice. The application of the blood was to effect the salvation of the firstborn. The fact that the lamb was spotless was not enough. The fact that it was taken on the tenth day of the month and examined until the fourteenth day of the month, to prove its spotless character, was not enough. The fact that the lamb was slain in the evening by the whole congregation of the nation of Israel was not enough. The fact that not a bone of the lamb's body was broken was not enough. The fact that the uneaten portion of the lamb, which remained until morning, was burned so that it would not decay was not enough. The fact that the whole congregation ate of the lamb, which was roasted with fire and served with bitter herbs, was not enough.

All of these things were required, but unless the blood was applied to the door posts and to the lintel, so that it could be viewed by the Lord when He passed through the land about midnight, the firstborn in Israel would die along with the firstborn in Egypt. The sole distinction between the firstborn of Israel and the firstborn of Egypt was the application of the blood to the door posts and lintels of their houses, which declared their faith in the promise of God.

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When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, during the Passover season, our Lord sidestepped his flattering words and said:

... Art thou a master [Rabbi] of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:10-16)

As our Lord talked with him, He questioned how Nicodemus could be a Rabbi of the Jews and not know about the new birth. The new birth, that birth from above, had been revealed to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. It had been revealed in all of the sacrificial system and particularly in the Passover. Therefore it was Nicodemus' responsibility not only to know it, but to teach the truth of it to the nation of Israel. Yet he knew nothing of the new birth. Like so many others in Israel, he was spiritually blind; and when the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch.

Consequently our Lord told Nicodemus about the incident in the history of Israel when Moses lifted up the serpent before the nation to preserve them from their deadly wounds, which had been inflicted by serpents. The Jews involved were the children of the Jews who had been delivered by the blood of the passover lamb, forty years earlier. These Jews were born in the wilderness, or they were of that group that were not of age at the time of the unbelief of their parents. Thus Moses wrote of them:

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And

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the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Numbers 21:4-9)

The lifting up of the serpent was to these Jews what the Passover had been to their parents: that is, it was an allegorical portrayal of the salvation that is available in Jesus Christ. The significant events are quite evident. The Jews had sinned against the Lord with their murmurings. Therefore God judged them by sending poisonous serpents into their midst. As a consequence of the serpents' bites, the Jews were dying from the injected poison. Moses intervened for them and God was merciful; so He told Moses to make a serpent of brass and place it upon a pole and lift it up before the people. God promised that whoever looked upon the serpent would be saved from the consequences of their sin. Thus salvation came to them because of the mercy and grace of God through faith in the promise of God.

The allegorical significance of the events is also evident. Sin is represented by the poisonous serpents, because it was through a serpent that Satan introduced sin into this world. The effect of the poison injected by the serpents was death, and this was the effect of the introduction of sin into the human family. The placing of the brazen serpent upon a pole represented the judgment of sin upon the cross of Calvary, because it was upon the cross of Calvary that He who knew no sin, became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21).

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Our Lord referred to the account of the serpent because the Jews, who looked by faith, represent those who hear the truth of the gospel and believe it and are saved. Further, after they looked by faith, they were given entrance into the land of Canaan. In a similar fashion, the individual who looks by faith to the judgment of his sins in Jesus Christ, upon the cross of Calvary, is given spiritual life and is made a citizen in the kingdom of God.

We have seen that the new birth is also called *regeneration*. Regeneration carries the idea of being created anew. This is what Jesus told Nicodemus. When an individual is born-again, he has a new standing before God. All that the born again individual was, is, and ever shall be in his sin nature was judged in Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary and was buried with Christ. All that Christ is, in His pristine Righteousness, has been imputed to the born again believer's account. Therefore the believer in Jesus Christ stands before God as a new creation in Christ Jesus. God has made him an object of His grace and is absolutely just in accepting the believer on this basis, because the Lord Jesus Christ stood in his stead in life to fulfill the law and all righteousness, and in death to bear the sinner's judgment:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled [Greek: *katallaso*: changed completely] us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (II Corinthians 5:17-21)

Towards the end of the gospel of John we learn that Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus Christ (John 19:38-42). Through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of

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the Spirit of God, he recognized that Christ had become the expression of God's love to a lost world; he recognized that the Lord Jesus Christ, *who knew no sin*, had offered Himself as a vicarious sacrifice for sin, dying the Just for the unjust; he recognized that his sins, as well as the sins of the whole world, had been judged in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

God had promised the Jews in Egypt that if they applied the blood of the passover lamb to the door post and to the lintels of their houses, then He would pass over the judgment of the firstborn in every house where the blood was applied. The apostle Paul has shown us there is a connection between Christ and the Passover, so we can expect to see the things that were required of the passover lamb fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We can also expect to see most of the Jews observing the Passover out of tradition, with no understanding of its spiritual significance. For had they understood its significance, they might have been looking for their Savior, rather than a political leader to deliver them from Roman bondage.

Nevertheless let us assume the Jews observed the passover in accordance with the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. In that case, on the tenth day of the month of Abib, each Jewish family was required to select a male lamb of the first year from the sheep, or from the goats; they were to examine it until the fourteenth day of the month to find it without spot or blemish; they were to kill the lamb on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month; they were to catch its blood in a basin and apply the blood to the door post and lintel; they were to roast the lamb whole, with bitter herbs and were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread and wine.

After their meal, they would sing the Hallel, which means *praise*. The Hallel is a group of Psalms (113-118 and 136), which emphasizes the fact that God's *mercy endureth for ever*. In

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Psalm one hundred eighteen, Christ is identified as the source of God's enduring mercy:

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:22-24)

The day that Jesus Christ was rejected by Israel is a day to be rejoiced in. Not because Israel rejected the Lord, but because it was the day He was sacrificed for our sins. Thus it is a day of gladness. It is the day which God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the day which was portrayed in the offering of Isaac, when God gave Abraham a preview of the sacrifice of the Beloved Son of the Father. In that preview, Abraham called the mount where he took Isaac, *Jehovahjireh*, which, as we have seen, means, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*. In the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham was privileged to see a portrayal of the day which the Lord had promised to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden: *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel* (Genesis 3:15).

God's promise to Adam was portrayed in the mount of the Lord, and it was fulfilled in the *seed of the woman*, who is Jesus Christ, so that *when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Galatians 4:4-5).

The day *which the Lord hath made* was predetermined in *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God* to be accomplished by the second Person of the Godhead, when, *in the fullness of the time*, by the sacrifice of Himself at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, He would provide a remedy for sin. Further it was predetermined that until this sacrifice was made, it would

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be prefigured by animal sacrifices. There was a continual portrayal of the *day that the Lord hath made* in all of the sacrifices from the garden of Eden to the cross of Calvary:

For it [was] not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:4-10)

Thus the animal sacrifices were offered as tokens of the one sacrifice that would be made by Jesus Christ. Christ came to take away the first system with its types, that He might establish the second system that fulfilled the types. The second system was heavenly and was completed by Him Who is heavenly. Therefore all of the sacrifices offered in obedience to the command of God throughout the Old Testament have their spiritual substance and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

This, of course, included the passover lamb, which was taken on the tenth day of the month of Abib (Nisan) and was examined from the tenth day of the month until the fourteenth day of the same month to determine if it was suitable for sacrifice. It had to be without spot or blemish according to God's command. Consequently, if the Scriptures are read with understanding and are not wrested to fit traditional views, we will, as already suggested, observe a perfect fulfillment of the examination and sacrifice of the Passover Lamb in Jesus Christ.

Many times we find that traditional views can obscure the truth rather than clarify it. According to church tradition, the Lord Jesus Christ made His *triumphal entry* into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Easter. Thus, because of the strewing of palm branches in His path, it has been

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called *Palm Sunday*. According to the same tradition, Christ was crucified on the following Friday, which has resulted in it being called *Good Friday*. Despite the devotion of those who hold these traditions, they do not fit the facts disclosed in Scripture.

Every believer in Jesus Christ has the obligation to be like the Berean Jews who heard the apostle Paul preach. Paul said of them, *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* If we examine the Scriptures carefully, we shall see that an insistence upon holding to the traditional view of *Palm Sunday* and *Good Friday* causes a discrepancy by creating an artificial contradiction in the Word of God. Since the Bible is the Word of God and God cannot lie, there cannot be a contradiction in these events. If there appears to be a contradiction there must be a misunderstanding of the facts.

One of the first facts we must consider is the length of time our Lord said He would be in the tomb. This is easily discovered, for in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, He said: *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here* (Matthew 12:39-41, emphasis mine).

The Good Friday theory states that our Lord was crucified on Friday and placed in the tomb just prior to sundown, which, according to the Jewish calculation of time, would be the beginning of their sabbath. Further the Scriptures tell us Joseph of Arimathaea claimed the body

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of our Lord at that time, or so it appears, ... *because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath* (Mark 15:42). By this, it would seem our Lord was crucified on Friday but for the text cited above, which demands that our Lord be in the tomb for three days and three nights.

The Jews observe a different system of counting days, as we have alluded, than the Roman system which is now in common use. We must remember that it is in accordance with the Jewish method that time is reckoned in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and Roman time in the gospel of John. Now, according to Jewish reckoning, the day begins and ends at sundown. This is common knowledge and requires no proof, even though the Scriptures provide abundant proof that this is so.

If we apply this information to the *sign of the prophet Jonah*, which Jesus gave the Jews, we can expect the *three days and three nights* to be counted from sundown to sundown according to the Jewish method, in which the night precedes the day. Obviously then, according to this division, the night is from sundown to sunrise, and the day is from sunrise to sunset. If we utilize this method of counting days, there cannot be three days and three nights from sundown Friday to before sunrise on Sunday. I am a stickler for the Word of God, so I take the position that our Lord fulfilled the *sign of the prophet Jonah*, because it was given as a proof to the Jews that He was (is) the Christ. If He fulfilled it, we must conclude that Jesus was not crucified on Friday.

However for the sake of considering all sides, there is a theory, which was espoused by the late Dr. A. T. Robertson, which says, *The well-known custom of the Jews was to count a part of a day as a whole day of twenty-four hours*. However in Dr. Robertson's explanation, he only counted days between Friday and Sunday. He counted a small portion of Friday and of Sunday

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as whole days; but the *sign* specifically divided the day into its two component parts: *night and day*. Using Dr. Robertson's theory, I can only obtain two days and two nights between the time just before sundown on Friday and just before sunrise on Sunday.

Observe, counting according to Dr. Robertson's theory, the time that remained on Friday after Christ's crucifixion and before and including His burial is counted as one day. Sundown Friday to sunrise Saturday is counted as one night. Sunrise to sundown Saturday is counted as the second day, and sundown Saturday to sunrise on Sunday is counted as the second night. Thus we arrive at the time when the women came to the tomb on *The first day of the week ... when it was yet dark* (John 20:1); and we discover that we have only counted two days and two nights, using the partial day theory. This by no means satisfies me, and it certainly does not satisfy the statement of our Lord concerning the period of time that He was to be in the grave.

Either our Lord did not fulfill the *sign of the prophet Jonah*, or He was crucified on some day other than Friday, as has been assumed. It is interesting to note that those who believe in a Friday crucifixion also believe that Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Sunday, which they call *Palm Sunday*. The apostle John supplies the second fact which must be considered concerning the chronology of those days:

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

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For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. (John 12:1-13, emphasis mine)

For the sake of argument, let us assume that Christ was crucified on Friday according to the traditional view. If Christ was crucified on Friday, then that particular Friday was the preparation day for the Passover because the apostle John said:

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (John 19:31)

Now, according to the previous text, Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover, and on the next day He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. According to the Scriptures, the Passover always began at sundown. Therefore if Christ was crucified on Friday, Passover began at sundown, which was, in this example, Saturday. Counting back six days, according to the passage in John twelve, we come to Sunday, the ninth of Nisan, the day Jesus came to Bethany. John tells us that it was on the next day, the tenth of Nisan, that Christ made His entry into Jerusalem. Therefore if Christ was crucified on Friday, His entry into Jerusalem was on Monday. Thus *Good Friday* necessitates a *Palm Monday*, not a *Palm Sunday*.

The problems surrounding the Friday crucifixion of our Lord arise because of an assumption. The assumption is that the impending sabbath following the crucifixion was a Saturday sabbath. However there is a parenthetical note supplied by the apostle John in the above

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text which provides the solution. John said, *For that sabbath day was an high day*. That is, that sabbath was one of the *high*, or *holy days*, in the Jewish calendar. The truth that is missed by most people who hold to a Friday crucifixion is that every Passover was observed as a sabbath. This can be seen in the instructions for the Passover, found in Exodus chapter twelve: *And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you* (Exodus 12:16, emphasis mine). This means that the first day of unleavened bread, which was the Passover, and the last day of unleavened bread were observed as sabbaths; which means it was not necessary for Christ to have been crucified on Friday in order to have a sabbath imminent at sundown.

The assumption that Christ's crucifixion coincided with a Saturday sabbath has caused grave concern on the part of those who recognize that there are not three days and three nights in the period between Friday evening before sundown and Sunday morning before sunrise. The question then arises, when was Christ crucified? My personal belief is that Christ was crucified on Wednesday, because a Wednesday crucifixion fits all of the circumstances dictated by the Scriptures.

The Bible says that Jesus came to Bethany from Jericho six days before the Passover. If Jesus was crucified on Thursday instead of Friday, as some have supposed, His trip from Jericho to Bethany would have been on a Saturday. This is not possible, because this would have caused our Lord to violate the sabbath. Our Lord tested the rabbinical interpretation of sabbath law, but He would not have actually broken the sabbath by traveling first from Ephraim to Jericho and then

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from Jericho to Bethany, which, totally, would far exceed a sabbath days journey. Therefore the distances involved negate the possibility of a Thursday crucifixion:

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, [Insert John 12:12: *On the next day...*] he sendeth forth two of his disciples. (Mark 10:46-11:1)

Now, according to the Scriptures, the Passover was observed between the evenings of the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Abib (Nisan). Therefore the calendar date for Passover was the fifteenth day of the month. Subtracting the six days of John chapter twelve brings us to the ninth day of Abib, which was the day that our Lord came to Bethany. He arrived there, after traveling from Jericho, which, considering the distance, was probably just before sunset, which would begin the tenth of the month. In Bethany He and His disciples stayed in the house of Simon the leper, where they made Him a supper.

After supper Mary came and anointed the feet of the Lord with an ointment of spikenard and wiped His feet with her hair. Judas Iscariot became indignant, because the ointment was very expensive, and he wanted to know why it had not been sold and the money given to the poor. The apostle John is careful to tell us: this bit of hypocrisy was not because he cared for the poor, but Judas was the keeper of the purse and he was a thief. It was then that Jesus said, *Let her alone:*

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against the day of my burying hath she kept this. This statement is significant, because by this time, the sun had set and it was the evening of the tenth of the month, the day when the passover lambs would be presented for examination and death on the fourteenth.

If, as we believe, Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, that would mean our Lord's trip to Bethany from Jericho was on Friday. The entry into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, was on the next day. The question then arises, was it lawful for Jesus to travel the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem on the sabbath day? The answer is found in the first chapter of the book of Acts, where we read: *Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey* (Acts 1:12).

Our Lord used Bethany, at the mount of Olives, as His base of operation during much of His Judaeen ministry and especially during this final week of His life on this earth. After His entry into Jerusalem, He returned to Bethany:

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

And when even was come, he went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. (Mark 11:12-20)

At this stage in Israel's history, she was in a state of apostasy, which was evident by their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. The barren fig tree was like Israel, it had an outward show of life

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and fruitfulness but was useless in terms of producing any real fruit. The practices in the temple had become empty sacrifices for financial gain. The priesthood was void of any understanding of the truth and merely perpetuated the commandments of men while rejecting the Word of God. It was time for God to break off Israel, the natural branches, and graft in the Gentiles, the wild branches, according to Paul's prophecy in Romans eleven:

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (Romans 11:15-21)

Thus the cursing of the fig tree was synonymous with the cursing of Israel, and almost as quickly as the fig tree withered, Israel ceased to exist as a nation. This took place in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. The Jews who were not killed, or starved to death during the siege, were scattered among the Gentile nations of the world.

Even so, in accordance with the promise of God, Israel was restored to the status of being a nation among the nations on May 14, 1948. The *dry bones* of Ezekiel thirty-seven had risen from their graves among the nations of the world, where they had been buried for the better part of nineteen hundred years. On that day she became a nation once again. Even so, at this time, she does not have the breath of God within her, because she has not yet trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior.

In the mean-time we await the day when the true church, made up of Jews and Gentiles,

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will be caught away in the first resurrection, *to ever be with the Lord*. After that the antichrist will come to this earth; and professing Christendom, which has no better record than Israel, will be completely seduced by him.

The same conditions which caused the fall of Israel shall cause the fall of professing Christendom. The neglect of sound doctrine, the failure to separate herself from the false religious systems in the land and her ignorance of the Word of God produced Israel's fall. The prophet Hosea said, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*, and Amos wrote of a time when there would be a famine, not for bread, but for hearing the Word of God. Professing Christendom has not learned from Israel's mistakes and has plunged itself into the same kind of error, even though everything that happened to Israel, happened for the church's admonition and instruction. The conditions which existed in Israel shall continue unheeded in the churches until there is a complete departure from the truth and the man of sin is revealed:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (II Thessalonians 2:1-4)

When Jesus purged the temple, He did so because of the corruption of the whole Judaic system. Afterward He returned with His disciples to Bethany. On the next day, Monday, the twelfth day of Abib, Jesus came again to Jerusalem. On His way into the city, He and His disciples came to the fig tree which He had cursed the previous day. The disciples marveled that the fig tree was already withered. The rapid decline of the fig tree was an object lesson to the

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disciples of the impending judgment of the nation of Israel. In about forty short years Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the Jews who would survive would experience our Lord's pronouncement, *Behold your house is left unto you desolate* (Matthew 23:38).

As they stood before that tree, already withered at the root: ... *Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith* (Mark 11:21-23).

The sea is used to represent the Gentile nations of the Mediterranean world in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and a mountain is used to represent a kingdom in the second chapter of Daniel. If we apply this usage to the above statement of our Lord, it becomes a prophetic description of Israel's dispersion among the Gentile nations of the world. Now, as we have seen, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and the Romans drove almost all of the remaining Jews from the land of Israel after the insurrection of Bar Kochba in 135 A.D., thus fulfilling this prophecy.

After viewing the fig tree, our Lord and His disciples continued on into the city to the temple, where our Lord faced the close scrutiny and examination of the religious leaders. They impudently asked Him: *By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?* The Jews were astounded by His question and so *they reasoned*

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with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet (Matthew 21:24-26). With all of their powers of reasoning the Jews could not come up with a solution to their dilemma, *And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things* (Matthew 21:27).

The Jews' desire to find fault with our Lord was born out of self-righteousness and jealousy, and though the different sects of the Jews would not ordinarily agree on anything, when it came to their hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ they had a common cause. They came purposely trying to find fault with Him, and this, unwittingly, became an examination of the Passover Lamb. The Pharisees came with the Herodians. This was a rare pairing, because the Pharisees were the fundamentalist of Judaism and the Herodians were the radicals:

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way. (Matthew 22:15-22)

This encounter must have brought great disappointment to the Pharisees and Herodians, because they believed they had the perfect question to ensnare Him. If He answered in favor of the Pharisees, the Herodians would be offended; and if He answered to the satisfaction of the Herodians, the Pharisees would be offended. Nevertheless their duplicity was rendered impotent

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when He answered, *Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.* Defeated by the wisdom of the spotless Lamb of God, they *went their way.*

The Sadducees also came to question Him. They came with the same dishonesty that had been displayed by the Pharisees and Herodians, hoping to find fault. The Sadducees were to Judaism what the modernists have been to the church. They were the rationalists, the so-called scholars who explained away spiritual truth. They did not believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, nor did they believe in heaven, or hell, or in angels, or in the resurrection of the dead. The doctrine of the resurrection was the primary basis for the rift between them and the Pharisees. Nevertheless, like the Pharisees and the Herodians, they came to our Lord with a question which they believed was of such a nature, it could not be answered by anyone who believed in the resurrection of the dead. So they said unto Him:

... Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine. (Matthew 22:24-33)

The Sadducees' question rivaled the question which was devised by the Pharisees and the Herodians. Whether the woman who was the subject of their question existed or not, or whether she was a figment of their imagination, does not really matter. The Sadducees must have searched

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long or dreamed hard to come up with her. It is amazing how hard some people will work to deny the truth of the Word of God, so that they might go to hell.

Jesus said to them, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living* and *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*. Therefore the Sadducees were silenced by the fact that God is a living God, Who reigns over the living. They were also shamed by their ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of God. Thus before Jesus, they were silenced. The Pharisees' problem was self-righteousness based upon a legalistic view of what constituted a proper relationship with God. The Sadducees believed themselves to be intellectually superior, but they were ignorant of the Word of God. The respective errors of the Pharisees and the Sadducees caused them to fail to recognize that Jesus was the Christ.

Each of the groups which came to examine Jesus had its own particular reason for rejecting the truth. The Herodians' allegiance was to Herod, because they believed him to be the Christ. The chief priests' allegiance was to themselves, because they were afraid of losing their high positions in the religious life of the nation of Israel. The scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees and were steeped in Talmudic teaching; so they held to the traditions of the elders, which made the commandments of God of none effect (Mark 7:6-13). Therefore each of the groups were alienated from the truth of God's grace in Jesus Christ for their own selfish reasons.

Each of the groups confronted Jesus, hoping to find fault, but each confrontation was met with Godly wisdom by the Word and power of God. Finally the efforts of the Jews to find fault were exhausted, because, like Pilate, they could find *no fault in this just man*. Jesus was indeed the Lamb of God; He was spotless and without blemish, and He was willing and ready to offer

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Himself as the only sacrifice for sin. He was their Passover: the Author of eternal salvation, but they failed to recognize Him. Therefore He was in Jerusalem to carry out what He had determined to do *before the foundation of the world*. The Jews had hoped to discredit Jesus with their questions. But when that failed *no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions* (Matthew 22:46).

After our Lord was questioned by the various groups which came trying to find fault, He brought a scathing denunciations upon His examiners. He revealed the emptiness of Judaism as it existed in that day, with its outward show and inward corruption. The Judaic system, as it existed then, was not too different from many of the religious systems in the world today. It exalted man; it had zeal and an outward purity; it was steeped in tradition; it had a revered priesthood who performed an impressive liturgy in a spectacular temple; it had all that men, who think according to a way which seemeth right unto them, desire of religion. It certainly gave the Jews something about which they could boast and think themselves holy.

However Judaism was inwardly corrupt. It was full of hypocrisy and it was totally blind to the truth. The greatest problem in Judaism, despite the fact that the oracles of God were committed to them, was that it was virtually powerless to bring a sinner to God. The truth of the grace of God had been revealed to the Jews in the sacrificial system. However through their traditions and their attempts to establish their own righteousness, the truth of the grace of God had been completely lost to the Jews' understanding. They were puffed up in their fleshly minds and blind to the truth. Therefore Jesus preached the message which is contained in the twentythird chapter of Matthew, exposing the Jews' blatant hypocrisy: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,*

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hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matthew 23:27-28).

This message stripped the Jews bare and should have caused them to cry out, *Lord, what would you have us to do?* But it did not. Their hearts were as hard as flint. They were professional hypocrites and saw themselves holy, despite the convicting power of our Lord's message. Rather than repenting, they continued their facade.

To their minds, it would be easier to get rid of the source of their conviction than it would be to change years of finely honed skills, which perfected their hypocrisy. On the next day, Tuesday, the thirteenth of Abib:

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people. (Matthew 26:3-5)

At this point in the narrative, Matthew and Mark tell the story of the anointing of Jesus by Mary, which had taken place after supper on the tenth day of the month, after our Lord and His disciples had made the trip to Jericho and then from Jericho to Bethany, six days before passover. The fact that Matthew and Mark place the anointing of our Lord for burial in a different context than the apostle John is not a contradiction. Matthew and Mark simply recorded the account in the context of the events of the thirteenth day of the month to establish Judas' motive for betraying the Lord.

Thus it was on the thirteenth day of the month of Abib that the Jews counseled together to put Jesus to death. On the same day Judas declared his intentions of betraying Jesus into the hands

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of the Jews. (It is interesting to note: four hundred and fifty years earlier, a man named Haman had plotted the death of God's people on the very same day of the very same month.

This is recorded in Esther 3:12-13).

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. (Matthew 26:14-16)

The Lamb of God had been selected, examined, approved for death, and promised for delivery at the appointed time. On the beginning evening of the fourteenth day of the month, the disciples inquired where they should prepare for the Passover. (The beginning evening may seem like an odd expression, but since each day began and ended at sunset, each day would have a beginning and ending evening.)

Now the first day [i.e., the preparation day] of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. (Matthew 26:17-20)

This day is the day that the apostle John refers to as the *preparation* day. It is the day on which the Passover lambs were slain. The lambs were slain about 3:00 p.m., as the fourteenth day neared its conclusion. As we consider the events of this day, we must remember that the events in the upper room and the subsequent events in the garden of Gethsemane took place in the night, which precedes the day in Jewish reckoning. All of the events from the meal in the upper room to the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ took place on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Abib.

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There has been much discussion about whether Christ ate the Passover with His disciples or not. I believe it is very unlikely that Christ and His disciples ate the lamb roasted with fire, because the Passover lamb was not slain until the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month. At that time, the whole lamb was roasted, which would take several hours, and it was eaten between the evenings of the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month. We know that at the time that the Passover lambs were slain, *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us* (I Corinthians 5:7). Therefore the lamb had not yet been prepared when the Lord and His disciples met in the upper room.

On the preparation day of the Passover all leaven was removed from the houses in anticipation of the week of unleavened bread. Therefore the disciples prepared the upper room for the Passover. Jesus then came with His disciples to the upper room where they ate their evening meal. They were all together on the eve of the Passover. During the meal Judas was revealed as the traitor, when Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to him. After that Judas went out to betray the Lord into the hands of the Jews, as he had promised the day before. It is likely that Judas had left the upper room before the Lord's supper was observed.

The Lord's supper is a remembrance feast. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus so that believers would have the opportunity to remember what it cost the Lord to produce their salvation. Therefore, in the observance of the supper, the believer reflects upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes again. Thus the Lord's supper provides an opportunity for the believer to remember that *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us*.

In the observance of the supper, the grace of God is magnified. Thus the believer is

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motivated by the constraining love of Christ to keep Christ's commandments, which are not grievous. Christ gave this age three commandments: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment* (I John 3:23). These two commandments provide the motivation for the third: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Thus all service for Jesus Christ is produced by the constraining love of Christ and not by law and the efforts of the flesh. The actual supper is simple. Believers assemble together for the purpose of remembering the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes again in His second coming. This is done by eating bread and wine. The bread is unleavened, and it represents the body of our Lord, and the wine represents His blood.

The two elements which are used in the remembrance feast have tremendous significance. The unleavened bread, which speaks of Christ's body, is made without a leavening agent, because, in the Bible leaven speaks of sin and false doctrine. Therefore for the bread to represent Jesus Christ, it has to be without leaven, because *in Him was no sin at all*.

The unleavened bread is made of wheat flour, which speaks of the humanity of Christ. Jesus said, *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone*. Therefore the grain of wheat is Christ. In order for wheat to become flour it must be ground. Therefore the grinding of the wheat into the flour, which is used in the unleavened bread, speaks of Christ's sufferings and trials in His body as Jesus of Nazareth. The flour is combined with olive oil. The

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olive oil speaks of the Deity of Christ. Throughout the Scriptures olive oil is used to represent the Holy Spirit. The priests were anointed with oil. The seven-branched lamp in the tabernacle was fueled by olive oil. Therefore the combination of wheat flour and olive oil speaks of the infusion of humanity and deity in one Theanthropic person, Who is Jesus Christ. To the flour and oil is added salt. Salt is a preservative. Therefore salt speaks of Christ's work of Salvation. In the instructions for the various sacrifices, which were given by Moses, God commanded that no offering could be made without salt. Jesus said to the Jews, who were the custodians of the message of salvation before this church age, *Ye are the salt of the earth*. Therefore as the flour and oil speak of the Person of Christ, the salt speaks of the work of Christ. Finally, the last element which is added to the flour, oil, and salt, is water. Water speaks of life. The Bible declares that Jesus is the Water of Life. Jesus said, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. The water in this verse is rain water, i.e., it is the water of life, which comes down from heaven. Therefore the water supplies the purpose for the sacrifice, which is to provide life for all who will receive Jesus Christ, the Water that came down from heaven.

The flour, olive oil, salt, and water are combined and beaten to form the dough which is baked to make the unleavened bread. The process of beating the dough speaks of Christ's suffering in His trial before His crucifixion. Finally the loaf is sprinkled with frankincense and baked in an oven. The baking speaks of Christ's crucifixion, and the frankincense speaks of the bitterness of death. *He who knew no sin became sin for us*.

The other element which is used in the feast is wine. It is not grape juice. The wine speaks of the blood of Jesus Christ. The Jews always use wine in the observance of the Passover.

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The Scripture says, *Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission.* And it says, *The life of the flesh is in the blood.* Therefore there must be a distinction between blood and blood. The distinction between the blood of man and the blood of Christ can be compared to the difference between grape juice and wine.

In this book we have observed a difference between the first and second-born and those things which are first and second in order of time or authority. In the relationship between grape juice and wine that difference is again observed. Of the two, which comes first, grape juice or wine? The answer, of course, is grape juice. Paul said, *that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.* By this analogy wine represents the spiritual, i.e., the blood of Christ

There is an interesting difference between grape juice and wine besides the alcoholic content of the wine (see Ephesians 5:18). Grape juice contains leaven. That is why grape juice will ferment. However after the process of fermentation, which changes grape juice into wine, the wine is unleavened. Therefore I believe that grape juice can represent the blood of ordinary men, but it cannot represent the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ must be represented by wine, because it is unleavened; and the Jews were required to remove every trace of leaven from their houses before they observed the Passover.

Traditional observances of the Lord's supper have made it a sad occasion because the emphasis has been placed upon the life of the believer and the confession of his sins, lest he should eat of the bread unworthily. This remembrance is not of the believer and his sins, but is a remembrance of the Lord in His Person and in His work. Thus it is a time of rejoicing:

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The stone [Jesus Christ] which the builders [the religious leaders in Israel] refused [crucified] is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:22-24)

After Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, He and His disciples sang a song (probably Psalm 118), and they left the upper room. They crossed the brook Cedron (Kidron) and came to the garden of Gethsemane. In the garden Jesus suffered tremendous agony. Perhaps the agony which He suffered there was even greater than the physical agony of the cross. In the garden Jesus was so identified with the sins of the whole world that it caused Him to sweat great drops of blood.

Under the sacrificial system, which God gave to Moses to portray the grace of God, the priest identified the sins of the offender with the sacrificial lamb by placing the hands of the sinner upon the head of the sacrifice. This laying on of hands was a portrayal of the transferral of the sins of the offender to the victim.

Jesus is our Great High Priest. At the same time, Jesus is the only suitable sacrifice for sin. Therefore Jesus appropriated to Himself the sins of the whole world by an act of judicial imputation. It was this identification with sin that occasioned the Lord's request: *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* This request was not out of the fear of death nor out of a desire to sidestep the purpose for which Jesus came into this world. The request was for our benefit and understanding. Jesus said these words so that everyone would realize that there is no possible means of salvation other than in Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, even though Jesus knew that He must take the sins of the whole world upon Himself, His understanding did not reduce the agony of such a prospect. Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Therefore Jesus' anticipation of the transferral

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of the sins of the whole world to Himself, upon the cross of Calvary, produced the blood sweats.

Medically, the sweating of blood is called *diapedesis*. Webster defines it as, *1: The passage of blood cells through capillary walls into the tissues; especially: active amoeboid passage of leukocytes between the enclosing endothelial cells. 2: loss of blood without detectable gross lesions* (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged). In the garden of Gethsemane, the blood passed through the body tissues of our Lord by diapedesis. As the blood formed on the surface of the skin, it coagulated, because the word for drops is *thrombos* in the Greek text, which means *blood clots*. Please take note of the Biblical account:

And he came out, and went as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. (Luke 22:39-46)

The agony of Gethsemane was the anticipation of being *made sin for us*. It is difficult for us, with our sin nature, to realize the total agony this would bring to our Lord; but we must not forget He is God: thus without any taint of sin from all eternity. His nature is not just sinlessness, in a negative sense, but complete righteousness in a positive sense. In this regard, some have posed the question -- "Could Christ have sinned, when He was tempted of the Devil, or at anytime during His earthly ministry?" The answer is, Absolutely not!

Even so, by the judicial reckoning of God, *He who knew no sin was made sin for us*. Thus He willingly partook of the cup which was before Him, because He was committed to the will of

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the Father. This can be seen from His remarks on the day He made His entry into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass:

... The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. (John 12:23-27)

As Jesus agonized in the garden, God sent an angel to minister to Him in His hour of trial.

The disciples, who a few hours earlier had pledged undying devotion, were asleep. There was no comfort there:

And he went a little farther and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:39-41, emphasis mine)

This human spirit of ours aspires to loyalty and the doing of great things, but we do not know how weak it is. The disciples' pledges of a few hours earlier were already broken. Three times Jesus encouraged them to watch and pray, and three times they were overcome by weariness:

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed unto the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. (Matthew 26:44-46)

Earlier that evening, Jesus told Judas to do his work quickly. An hour or two elapsed between the identification of Judas as the traitor and the moment when Judas came to the garden:

And while [Jesus] yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a

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great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. (Matthew 26:47-56)

When we consider the events of that night we can be very self-righteous in our judgments of the disciples. It is easy for us to say *How could they forsake Him?* It is easy to forget that we are no different than they. What Jesus said to them applies to us as well: *The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.* We dare not judge them, lest we judge ourselves. No one has any merit, or power of his own, to overcome the weaknesses of the flesh. Our victories come by the power of the Spirit of God and the Word of God by faith.

The Jews took Jesus into custody and led him away to an examination and trial before Israel and Rome. At that moment He was forsaken by the disciples. They all fled. However Peter and John followed *afar off*. John was known by the high priest; therefore he was able to gain access to the trial for both himself and for Peter. It was at the court of the high priest that Peter denied the Lord three times. This one who had pledged undying devotion, who also had drawn the sword in the garden, now cowered before a maid. Our fleshly weaknesses are almost inexplicable. After his final denial, Peter looked into the eyes of our Lord and, at that moment,

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he realized what Jesus meant when He said, *The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak*, and he wept bitterly:

And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? Tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? For we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. (Luke 22:66-71)

Our Lord had shown, in the parable of the *Husbandmen*, the Jews had killed the Son of the *Householder*. As prophesied, they would kill Him, the Son of God, but they preferred that He die by crucifixion rather than by stoning:

And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. (Luke 23:1-5, emphasis mine)

Pilate knew enough about the Jews and their traditions that he did not want to be involved in the crucifixion of their Messiah:

When Pilate [therefore] heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves. (Luke 23:6-12)

It is interesting to note the strange alliances which were formed in the judgment and

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condemnation of our Lord. The Pharisees had come with their enemies, the Herodians, to try to find fault with Him. Herod and Pilate, who formerly were enemies, had joined together in friendship for the purpose of crucifying the Christ; and the Jews, who despised the Romans, had brought Jesus before Pilate and then before Herod so that Jesus would be crucified.

Then upon the return of our Lord to the jurisdiction of Pilate, Pilate made one last attempt to avoid crucifying the Christ when he inquired who should be released according to custom, Barabbas or Jesus? Barabbas was guilty as charged, but he would be set free. Jesus was innocent, but He would die. What a marvelous picture of the doctrine of imputation. The sins of the whole world were charged to Jesus Christ. The Righteousness of God was then judicially charged to everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. All of us, like Barabbas, were and are guilty as charged. Even so, because Jesus stood in the stead of sinners, all sinners, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are set free from the penalty of sin. As the blood of the passover lamb prevented the judgment of the firstborn from falling on the Jews in Egypt, so the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

The trial was over and the Jews led Jesus to Calvary where they nailed Him to the cross. Jesus was hanged on a cruel tree at the time of the morning sacrifice, about nine. He hung there until the afternoon. At the time of the evening sacrifice, about three, Jesus said, *It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.* He was dead. *Christ our Passover had been sacrificed for us, dying the Just for the unjust.*

Abraham had said, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* Moses had said that the Jews were to remember the Passover as a memorial forever. On that day God sacrificed His Lamb to

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cover the sins of the whole world. Every detail of the Passover was fulfilled in Christ, from His presentation at the right time to His crucifixion at the right time. Jesus was the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, Who was slain by the whole congregation of the nation of Israel in the evening, and is remembered by all who trust in Him, forever!

There is one more requirement of the Passover lamb which we have not yet considered. Not one bone of its body could be broken. This was also fulfilled by our Lord.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. (John 19:31-37)

The apostle John reveals some pertinent information in this passage. First, John reveals that the legs of Jesus were not broken, even though the soldiers came for the expressed purpose of breaking the legs of each of the victims. This was a fulfillment of one of the requirements of the Passover lamb. God had said that not a bone of the lamb's body was to be broken. Second, Jesus did not die from the effects of crucifixion. Death by crucifixion usually took from twenty-four to thirty-six hours, but Jesus died just six hours after He was nailed to the cross. Jesus willingly gave up His life in fulfillment of a promise which Jesus made to His disciples, when He said: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father* (John 10:17-18).

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Third, John gives us a description of the soldiers as they came to break the legs of Jesus. When the soldier, who checked the body of Jesus, found that Jesus was already dead, he did not break his legs but thrust a spear into His side. That spear thrust provides us with a postmortem, so that we know the exact cause of our Lord's death. He did not die from crucifixion. He died from a broken heart.

The spear thrust caused both blood and water to gush from the wound. The blood was distinctly separated from the water, or fluid in the pericardium and the serum in the blood. According to "Dr. Stroud (On the Physiological Cause of the Death of Christ, London 1847) basing his remarks on numerous postmortems, pronounced the opinion that here we had a proof of the death of Christ being due not to the effects of crucifixion but to *laceration or rupture of the heart as a consequence of supreme mental agony and sorrow.*" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. I, pg. 489, Eerdmans, 1946).

This opinion, I believe, is in agreement with the statement of our Lord that no man could take His life from Him. Jesus had the power to lay His life down and He had the power to take it up again. The spear thrust provided the proof of His statements:

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand. (John 19:38-42)

Joseph and Nicodemus were pressed by the nearness of the Passover sabbath to obtain the

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body of Jesus. If they hurried, there was just enough time to obtain the body and prepare it for burial. They were aided by the use of Joseph's tomb, which was nearby. Thus our Lord was buried in Joseph's tomb as sunset loomed on the preparation day of the Passover.

Before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there were at least six occasions when Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. The following is one of those predictions:

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. (Matthew 20:17-19)

The death of Jesus Christ was no accident, neither was it a fortuitous concord of circumstances. It was carefully planned by the Godhead before the foundation of the world. Jesus came into this world by the virgin birth at the appointed time. He lived His life in fulfillment of the law and all righteousness. At the precise time, which was determined before the foundation of the world, He died for sin. Jesus freely gave His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. However death was not the end of Him. The grave could not hold Him. At the precise time, which was after *three days and three nights*, Jesus arose from the dead.

After His resurrection, our Lord showed Himself alive to His disciples and to over five hundred witnesses at one time. He had repeatedly predicted His death and resurrection. It was no fluke. Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God. The same resurrection life, which raised Jesus from the dead, is promised to all who put their trust in Him: *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19).

God's instructions to the Jews about the eating of the Passover lamb required that if any

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part of the paschal lamb remained unto the morning uneaten, it was to be burned with fire. The reason for burning the residue of the lamb was so that it would not decay. The significance of burning the residue is resurrection. When the residue of the lamb was burned it was turned to gases by combustion and ascended as smoke. In the observance of the Passover, there was always a residue to burn because the lamb was roasted whole, with *its purtenance*, which means entrails.

The Psalmist David said:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Sheol: the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption [decay]. (Psalm 16:9-10)

There is no question that Jesus Christ is our Passover, which was sacrificed for us. Jesus fulfilled the Passover. He fulfilled the *sign of the prophet Jonah* and He will fulfill every promise which He has made to us that remains unfulfilled. Jesus Christ provides hope for the myriad of firstborn of this world, who have not yet put their trust in Him as their personal Savior. If the firstborn, the unsaved of this world, will trust Him, they can become-second born, i.e., they can be born from above and have eternal life. In addition to eternal life they will have *an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* (I Peter 1:4-5).