



*B*ecause there is one loaf, we,
who are many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.

1 Corinthians 10:17

Sabbath Service
Saturday, March 24, 2007
“Problems with the Passover”



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(If you are meeting in a small group, select a leader for the day. The leader reads the text printed in regular face. The rest of the group reads the text printed in bold face and wherever it states "In Unison." If you are worshipping as a single individual, read all the parts.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise God in the assembly of the faithful;
Sing to God a new song, and dance for joy.
God takes pleasure in those who are faithful
And adorns the humble with victory.
God calls us to a fresh and abiding hope
And imparts to us the good news of salvation.

God is our maker, the Ruler over all things.

We take pleasure in our praise and service.

God meets us in our anxiety

And interprets to us what we do not understand.

God is merciful to all who live in love

And seek to do good to all people.

INVITATION *(In Unison)*

With all the saints of every time and place we come to worship you, God Most High.
We praise your glory and rejoice in the wisdom you reveal to us. Enlighten us once more in this time of adoration and blessing. Fill us with hope, even when conditions around us seem only to hurt and destroy. Help us to do good and show mercy, expecting nothing in return. Meet now our personal needs, as you minister among us. In Jesus name, Amen.

OPENING HYMN #10

"I Will Praise Thee, O Eternal"

*Psalm 9
Dwight Armstrong*

I will praise Thee, O Eternal; I will show forth Thy great works!
O Thou Most High God, Eternal; I will sing praise to Thy Name!
But my foes shall turn and stumble; At Thy presence they shall fall;
The Eternal judges rightly; And forever He will rule!

The Eternal lives forever; He destroys all wicked men;
He removes their name forever; Even their memory dies;

But He judges all with fairness; He will rule with equity;
All who know His Name shall trust Him; He will not forsake His own.

To the Lord who dwells in Zion, Sing to Him and praise His Name!
Tell His deeds among the nations! Tell of all His glorious works!
He avenges all His people; He will not forget their cry;
To the Lord who dwells in Zion; Sing to Him and praise His Name!

OPENING PRAYER *(In Unison)*

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

PERSONAL PRAYER *(In Silence)*

HYMN #148

“Rock of Ages”

*Agustus Toplady, 1776
Thomas Hastings, 1830*

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure; Save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labor of my hands Can fulfill Thy law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

While I draw this fleeting breath, When mine eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown, And behold thee on thy throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.

PRESENTATIONS BEFORE GOD *(Not monetary offerings)*

Time for any in attendance to offer a musical or instrumental piece, a reading, comments, or anything they would like to present before God.

If no one is prepared or if you want more, the link below will open a full choral anthem for your listening enjoyment.

“No, Never Alone”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Time for groups to make any necessary announcements relating to their own group.

This week’s message looks at some of the confusion that reigns among the different splinters concerning the Passover season and how we are to observe these days. The

differences are explored, but in the end, each individual will need to determine for themselves the best manner for them to observe the upcoming Holy Days, and which of the services provided on this website will best suit their needs. Three different services are provided in the Spring Holy Day section.

COLLECT *(Preparing for the lesson. In Unison)*

We hunger, O God, for more than bread. Feed us now with that spiritual food that lends a new taste and zest to lives grown stale and unimaginative. Teach us to care and to act from a love that demands nothing in return. Fill us with hope for Christ's reign in our midst, as we accept the ways of Jesus as a guide to our own conduct. Amen.

THE LESSON

(Use the lesson provided here, or conduct a study of your own selection.)

Problems with the Passover

There is so much controversy over when and how to keep the Passover that many are lost in utter confusion. Among the various Churches of God, we find some who observe a Lord's Supper at the end of Abib 13, which is the beginning of Abib 14 when one is observing a clock that begins the new day at sunset. Other groups ignore the Lord's Supper and only keep a Passover at the end of Abib 14, which is the beginning of Abib 15. Some groups observe both nights and other groups hold Passover on the wrong night from a belief that Jesus changed it.

For years we have all been under the belief that God's days were always marked from sunset to sunset and no one ever really questioned it. But recent research has provided evidence that this may not be true. The marking of time with respect to the days in ancient times was really broken into two parts — the day and the night.

When Moses recorded in Gen. 1:5, "So the evening and the morning were the first day," what he is noting is the completion of the two parts. The day ended with the evening, and the night ended with the morning, and the two parts made up the first day. With this understanding, we come to see that God's Sabbath days and Holy Days are all referring to the day portion, and with the exception of the Day of Atonement and the eating of the Passover after dark, they all begin at sunrise, and do not include the night portion of that calendar day.

So when God says that the 14th day of the first month is the Passover, the day portion begins at sunrise on the 14th. The lambs were killed "between the two evenings," which all seem to agree means between the time the sun is at its height in the sky until it travels fully westward and drops below the horizon. Today we would say from noon to sunset, or "in the afternoon." The lambs were then roasted and the Passover was eaten after dark — during the night portion of the

14th day of the first month, as the night portion of any calendar day follows the day portion.

To add to the confusion over the Passover among the Churches of God, there are also considerable differences in how these days are kept. Some groups attempt duplicating the biblical events spelled out in the gospels for the Lord's Supper. They hold a solemn service of reading scripture, washing one another's feet and the taking of the bread and wine.

But their services don't really emulate what Christ and the disciples did that night. It was a supper. They were sitting down to a meal which they ate together. There was a common pot of some kind that Jesus dipped the bread in and offered to Judas as way of identifying him as the one who would betray Christ. It was not wine he dipped the bread in. It is called a "sop" in some translations. It was likely some kind of soup or stew — food of some kind, not wine.

It was while they were eating a meal when this event took place and Judas got up from the table and went out (John 13:18-30). In that same chapter we read:

John 13:4 — so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

It was during the evening meal when Jesus got up and began washing the disciples feet. It was also during the meal that Jesus offered the bread and the wine. In Matthew 26:30 we read that when all these things were done, they all sang a hymn together, then went out to the Mount of Olives.

Few, if any, of the Lord's Supper services being conducted in the Churches of God today follow this model — and the mainstream churches don't even come close. This was the last supper that Jesus ate with his disciples. While it was a solemn occasion, it was still a gathering of great warmth, friendship, and a great amount of teaching on Jesus' part. Several chapters of John, containing some of the greatest of Jesus' teachings to his disciples, took place at this meal.

Most are generally in agreement that this meal was not the Passover meal. Last week's lesson, by Hubert Krause, spelled out a variety of reasons why it could not have been. Jesus never broke God's laws at any time in his life, so we know with a certainty that he would not have held a Passover meal on the wrong night.

One of the biggest problems in understanding for modern students of the scriptures is to remember to keep everything in context to the time frame in history when the events we are reading about happened. When Jesus and his disciples sat down at the table to eat the last supper together, they were living in a Jewish world. They were keeping the practices of their world at that time. The time frame of when things happened would have corresponded to when the

Jewish people were all observing the same things. The keeping of the Passover, and all of God's Holy Days, were the Law. Jesus at no time ever broke God's Law. If he had then he could not have been proclaimed as sinless. Sin is the breaking of the law (1 John 3:4).

There have been some researchers who have discovered the possibility that the Jews were divided in that day over the calendar — that the Jews from Galilee kept a different calendar from the Jerusalem or Judean Jews. There appears to be some evidence to support this theory, and is useful for those attempting to prove that the Lord's Supper was in reality the Passover. But, if it were true that the Jews were divided over when to observe God's Holy Days, Jesus would have taken them to task over it. He certainly never held back with censoring them on other subjects, so why would he not have pointed out that they were wrong on which days they were keeping. He never did, so we have to believe that they weren't observing the wrong days. The scriptures are clear that Jesus was keeping the same days they were. If they were keeping different calendars, they had found some way of calculating God's Holy Days so they were all keeping them at the same time.

Was the Lord's Supper a new observance?

Was Jesus instituting a new observance when he sat down to eat with his disciples? There is much controversy over this issue also. Those who observe both nights — the evening or beginning of Abib 14 and the following night, the beginning of Abib 15 (under the sunset to sunset method of time keeping) — believe that he was. Other groups take the stance that it was not a new observance to be kept on a certain date, but rather bring the elements of the foot washing and the bread and wine into their Passover observance.

The truth is there are no clear instructions contained in the gospel stories to really help us sort it out. Jesus tells the disciples after the bread and wine to “do this in memory of me.” But he doesn't specify they are to always do it on that night once a year nor does he offer up any other instructions. Paul later said “as often as you do this” (1 Cor. 11:26), but again there is no indication that it is to be done only once a year or on any given night. The word “often” does not mean once a year and no amount of rationale applied to it can make it mean that.

When you compare this event in the New Testament with the detailed instructions that God gave in the Old Testament for when and how to observe his Holy Days, it should become clear that this could not be a “new” observance that was being added. God was very clear, leaving no room for discussion, on when and how to keep his days, and ending with instructions to observe these days throughout the generations — or forever, in other words. We find nothing like this in relationship with Jesus' instructions at the Lord's Supper.

Furthermore, we are told in Malachi 3:6 that God never changes. If God never changes, than we have to believe that he also did not add a new observe in

30 A.D. Man has added new observances throughout history when it has suited him to do so, but the Holy Days and the special observances that God gave to mankind have not been changed or added to.

Additionally, a bread and wine ceremony was not new. There are several references in the Old Testament to the practice of taking the bread and wine, beginning with Melchizedek using bread and wine to bless Abraham (Gen. 14:18). To this day the Jews conduct a ceremony with challa bread and wine every week, and they have been doing so at various times since the days of Abraham. When Jesus was eating his last meal with his disciples, he took the same elements that they were already familiar with and said, in essence, from now on when you do this, “do it in memory of me.”

So does that mean they were to only do it once a year from then on? There is nothing in the gospel accounts to indicate that. Neither is there anything in the writings of the apostles to say that it should only be done once a year. This very well may be where the mainstream churches have it more right than the Churches of God in their observance of communion throughout the year — some weekly, some monthly, and some by a schedule of their own creation. Jesus said to do it in memory of him, but he gave no instructions for when or how often it was to be done. In contrast, God gave definite instructions for when his Holy Days were to be observed every year.

There are references to “love feasts” in the New Testament that many have taken to mean the same as the Lord’s Supper, but nothing to indicate they only happened once a year. Paul criticized the people for the way they were observing these feasts (1 Cor. 11:20-22). They were calling their gathering the “Lord’s Supper,” but Paul said they were not the Lord’s Supper. These were primarily Gentile Christians who had no background in the bread and wine ceremonies of the Jews. Paul was pointing out that they were being rude, showing gluttony in not waiting for one another when they sat down to eat, and some were even drunk. He makes the statement “don’t they have homes in which to eat and drink?” (paraphrased). This would indicate they were acting as if they were starved to death when they came together for a meal or “love feast,” and not showing proper respect for the practice of the bread and wine. Paul’s declaration that they were not the Lord’s Supper is used as an indictment against them for the way they were acting. It is as if he were saying “how dare you call this the Lord’s Supper?”

From this statement, the Churches of God today have eliminated the meal portion from the Lord’s Supper out of a belief that Paul was saying people should eat at home rather than when they came together for the bread and wine. They have also determined that the Lord’s Supper can only be observed once a year. That isn’t was Paul was saying at all. He was admonishing them for their bad table manners and their attitudes toward the reason they were coming together. He goes on in that same discussion to warn the people about taking the bread and the wine in an unworthy manner.

Other references to these “love feasts” indicate that many were taking them unworthily — not with the attitude of repentance or the love of God and their brothers and sisters in their hearts. Some were false teachers or apostate people who had entered the church and were sitting down to eat at the same table with the true believers (Jude 12).

Again, these are not instructions to stop holding dinners or to only hold them once a year. If one wants to emulate what happened at the Lord’s Supper, they need to include the supper. The bread and wine is not the supper. It is the memorial and blessing.

What Jesus did that night was not the Passover nor was it the institution of a new annual observance. It was the event at which he gave new meaning or understanding to a practice the disciples were already familiar with and one that had been going on for centuries.

The Bread

In last week’s lesson we also heard Kruse’s explanation for why the Greek word *artos* is used for the bread that Jesus offered at the Last Supper. *Artos* is the word that usually means regular bread with leavening. When unleavened bread is used, the word *azumos* is generally used. Kruse pointed out that *azumos* merely means “unleavened” and can be used to refer to more than just bread. While Kruse’s explanation is correct in general, there is still an element missing.

Under God’s Law, the only time unleavened bread is eaten is on Passover and during the seven days of Unleavened Bread. There is no other time when God requires the people to eat unleavened bread as part of any ceremony in the scriptures. He did require unleavened bread in some sacrifices placed on the altar by the priests, but that is quite different from the requirement to eat unleavened bread. As the Lord’s Supper was not the Passover, Jesus would never have been using unleavened bread. God’s instructions are clear about when the people were to remove the leaven from their homes in preparation for Passover. The removing of leaven from their homes was an important aspect of the preparations for the feast. At the time of the Lord’s Supper, that day to remove the leaven had not yet arrived. Once again, we have to remind ourselves that Jesus would not break any of God’s Laws. He would not have introduced “unleavened” bread at this meal without explanation and we don’t have anything in any of the gospels or apostolic writings to indicate that he did.

So, if nothing else proves the Lord’s Supper was not the Passover, the use of regular bread with leaven should be enough. When Paul spoke of the bread and wine later, he also used the word *artos*. Kruse’s argument in last week’s lesson, while not completely incorrect, is offered based on a pre-conceived idea that the bread used for taking the bread and wine must be unleavened bread. We have nothing in scripture to support this belief. Kruse is putting forth a belief that all

references to bread having to do with Christ as the sacrifice or as the “bread of life” must be of the unleavened variety. This is not scriptural, but is more likely based on the modern practice of using crisp wafers in the mainstream churches rather than on what the Bible says. It is all part of the confusion that has grown up in the church — a confusion that was begun even before the death of all the apostles. That confusion has led to the churches not even observing Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, but rather following a Good Friday and Easter Sunday tradition.

Further, Kruse stated that the word “leaven” means sin, therefore Jesus wouldn’t use leavened bread because he was “sinless” and had spoken of himself as the Bread of Life. The inferred message here being that that bread must also be of the unleavened variety. This is very misleading as the word “leaven” does not always mean “sin.”

Jesus used leaven in several parables where he was warning about becoming puffed up, egotistical, or filled with sin. Paul expanded on it to point out how a little leaven (sin) can work its way through the whole lump ... meaning a little sin in one’s life can grow and become more and more until it has affected the whole life. But Jesus also used the word leaven in his parable about the Kingdom of God. Based on Kruse’s explanation, that would mean that Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of God would be built on sin. Now that doesn’t make any sense. Obviously the word leaven has more meaning than just sin.

Another common belief is that the unleavened bread represents Christ’s broken body — the bread itself being pierced and stripped in the baking. This is a good representation for the Passover, as we are commemorating his sacrifice. The use of unleavened bread at that time is appropriate. But on the night of the Lord’s Supper, Christ had not yet made that sacrifice. When he spoke of himself that night — and in other parts of his message during his three-year ministry — as the *bread of life*, he was not speaking only of his broken body. Bread is considered the “staff of life.” It is made from the grain of the field, one of the whole foods that God has created to sustain life. Jesus, the bread of life that came down from heaven, is *artos*. He brings life and that more abundantly. In his death his body became *azumos* for a short time, followed by the glorious resurrection. We eat unleavened bread at Passover and for the seven Days of Unleavened Bread to commemorate that event. It commemorates the freeing of Israel from Egypt, as well as a reminder to put sin out of our lives in order to be more Christ-like. We don’t eat unleavened bread all year or at any other time. Those mainstream churches who use only flat wafers for their communion services throughout the year are crucifying Christ over and over again. They are keeping him dead and buried all year. They aren’t allowing him to arise in a glorious resurrection, as their image of him every time they take the bread and wine is “him crucified.” That is only half of the message. The resurrection is our hope of glory and cannot be represented with unleavened bread.

Another wrinkle in timing

Among the four gospels we run into seeming differences in the use of the word Passover and the timing of the events of Jesus' last week. We looked at some of those differences last week. For the most part, Kruse and many other writers, put forth a belief that the Lord's Supper was being held on the evening of Abib 13 after dark. Most of the world believes this to be the truth because Jesus was arrested during the dark nighttime hours of that same calendar day.

Nearly every Christian church in the world accepts the belief that Jesus was tried and convicted to the cross during that night and crucified during the daylight hours of the next day. (Those who follow the sunset to sunset way of timing say the same day.)

But that is another place where we run into a discrepancy. John says:

John 19:14 — It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. (NIV)

John 19:14 — And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! (KJV)

By the Hebrew way of reckoning time at that point in history, the night hours were divided into watches (i.e., the first watch, the second watch, etc.). The day was divided into hours, beginning about 6:00 a.m., with only 12 hours in a day. In the Bible, an hour is 1/12th of the period of daylight — longer in the summer and shorter in the winter. At the time of the Passover, the day and the night were about equal in length of time. So, when John says the sixth hour, he is not talking about 6:00 a.m. (which would be the first hour), but he is talking about 12:00 noon. It was the middle of the day when Jesus' appearance before Pilate ended and he was handed over to be crucified.

Now look at what Mark says:

Mark 15:25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.

Mark says that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, which would be 9:00 a.m. In verse 33 he says that Jesus died at the ninth hour (or 3:00 p.m.) There is no way Jesus could have been sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate and handed over at 12 noon and be crucified at 9 a.m. on the same day.

The only way this timing makes any sense at all is if Jesus were held in prison overnight between the sentencing and the crucifixion. It may surprise you to learn that the scriptures may support this premise. Read Mark 15:15-20. Following Pilate's sentencing, which John says was at 12:00 noon, the soldiers led Jesus back into the Praetorium, where they beat him, clothed him in purple, gave him the crown of thorns, and mocked him. It was after that we find the simple statement they "led him out to crucify him." But there is no timing

indication on when that happened. Only a few verses later Mark says that the crucifixion was at the third hour (9 a.m.). It would have to have been the following day if John's timing is correct.

There is evidence to support this in all the details of that night. Take the time to read what all the gospels record from the time of his arrest until his crucifixion, paying close attention to the details concerning timing. Many normally overlooked details will come to light.

While it was still dark, Jesus was arrested and taken to the home of Annas (John 18:13) where he was questioned. Then he was taken to Caiaphas, the high priest (John 18:24). Luke 22:66 says "As soon as it was day, ..." (meaning sunrise) the chief priests and scribes came together in council to question him some more. This would have been about 6:00 a.m. It was no longer dark, and the Sanhedrin was convening to question him. It was at this questioning when the false witnesses were brought in. To have had witnesses when he was before Annas or Caiaphas would not mean anything. That had to be before the full Sanhedrin. This would all take some time to listen to the witnesses, even though they were proven to be false.

It was only after they had questioned him that he was led to Pilate ... very likely well into the daylight hours. Pilate was a feared governor over the area and it is hard to imagine the Jews would have awakened him from his bed in the middle of the night or have requested a hearing with him too early in the morning — not if they wanted a favorable outcome. This was a Jewish problem, as far as Pilate was concerned, and it is unlikely he would have been too accommodating to the Jewish priests if they tried asking something from him before he was ready to meet the day. They could easily have found themselves in prison rather than accomplishing the goal they were set upon.

After Pilate questioned Jesus for a period of time, he discovered an out in the fact he was a Galilean and had him sent to Herod. Herod had been wanting to meet this man, so it is very likely he would have taken this opportunity to question him extensively. But even he did not see it as a Roman problem, and sent Jesus back to Pilate. Pilate did not want to convict Jesus and agonized over that decision.

Just consider the amount of time that was being consumed with all this, and we know it was already well into the daytime hours. If we look at it logically and separate ourselves from centuries of tradition that claims Jesus was tried at night, John's timing of the sentencing begins to make sense.

But Mark's timing of the crucifixion at 9 a.m. also makes sense. He was six hours on the cross. The skies darkened at around noon (three hours into the time frame) and he died at 3 p.m.

The only way any of this could have happened is if Jesus were held in prison overnight. If that is true than we have to move the Lord's Supper backwards another day to the evening of Abib 12 — two days before the Passover.

Again, all of this is a problem because of the timing statement differences among the four gospels. John says the Passover was drawing near. Matthew, Mark and Luke say it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lambs were killed. That statement alone is false, because the Passover lambs were not killed on the first day of the Days of Unleavened Bread, but rather the day before on the Preparation Day. So did the apostles all get it wrong or are we dealing with translation difficulties and possible editorial changes in the first and second centuries? Kruse's explanation last week of how the word "Passover" has come to be used for the whole period of the Days of Unleavened Bread, including the days leading into them, is accurate. Even today, the whole season is called "Passover" and extends for eight days.

But we'd like to introduce another possibility. Is it possible the gospel writers were trying to point out the most important element of the Passover — the Jesus was the Passover lamb? Perhaps what they wrote was not so much about making an accurate record of which day of the week they were speaking of as much as they were trying to point those who have eyes to see and ears to hear to the ultimate outcome of all of the days. They all make mention of "when the Passover lambs were killed."

One of things that all Churches of God agree on is that God has a master plan. That master plan has been unfolding over the past 6,000 years right on time according to the way God designed it. The first Passover and exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is a picture of God's later act of his son's sacrifice and resurrection. Knowing the precise timing of God's master plan, we have to know that it only makes sense if Jesus died on the cross at exactly the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed that year.

The scriptures say Jesus died at 3:00 p.m. According to Old Testament timing, that is right about the time the sacrifices at the temple would have begun. As the most important Passover lamb of all time, Jesus was the first lamb to die that year.

For Jesus to die at any other time would make everything else a lie. He would not be the promised Messiah and we would still be waiting for God to fulfill that promise just as the Jews still are today. We know that is not the case.

This could easily be an example from the synoptic gospel writers of burying the truth in plain sight — in the middle of a false or misleading statement. When they write it was the first day of the Days of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lambs were killed, they were speaking to those whom God was calling to the truth. The elect would recognize the inaccuracy of the statement and search for its meaning. The elect would know they were talking about the

Preparation day of the Passover and not the first day of the Days of Unleavened Bread. All others would just read over it and not get it at all. They were speaking more about Christ and what he would do than they were about precise timing of the events. Remember, these gospels were written years after it all happened, at a time when the writers had received and lived with the Holy Spirit for some time — at a time when they would have had a better understanding of what really happened. They did not understand it at the time it was all taking place. They were confused and scared, all abandoning Jesus to his fate and hiding to save their own lives. But, by the time they recorded the events, they had the help of the Holy Spirit and hindsight to draw on.

They were living in a pagan world and a church that had already become infiltrated with apostasy and those who would distort the truth. They preserved the truth of Christ as the Passover lamb right in plain sight. But only the elect would be able to see it. All others would either be confused and befuddled, or wouldn't even care.

And isn't that lack of caring what we see in the world today? It is only in the Churches of God where we see anyone wrestling with the timing on when to hold the Passover or of the events of that fateful week. The rest of the world doesn't care because they are either observing Good Friday and Easter Sunday or they are keeping a Jewish calendar that is calculated on an autumn beginning of the year in complete violation of the Holy Scriptures.

The Jewish Seder Dinner

There are some groups who are conducting what they call a Christian Haggadah on the night of Passover. This is a combination of the seder dinner that the Jews are observing at the same time, with the elements of the footwashing and the bread and wine from the Lord's Supper slipped in at various points. The rationale for holding a seder dinner is explained from Matt. 23:2-3. Jesus said that the Jews (Pharisees) sit on Moses' seat, therefore we are to do what they say, but not to do what they do.

What could Jesus possibly mean by that? First, we have to note he said "Moses' seat." That directs our attention back to what Moses taught. We find that in the first five books of the Old Testament. Jesus said we are to do what is taught from Moses. But we are not to do what the Jews were doing.

By the time of Jesus the Jews were following their own traditions — traditions that originally began with Moses, but had been added on to and modified through the years until they had become quite unrecognizable from the original in many respects. These Jewish traditions are found in many volumes of works that collectively are called the *Talmud*. Jesus is basically saying we are to follow and obey the *Torah* (the first five books of the Old Testament — the teachings of Moses), not the *Talmud* (the Jewish commentary on the *Torah*).

The Churches of God today have become very confused over this scripture in Matthew. Many are observing Passover in the Jewish manner because Jesus said the Jews sit on Moses' seat. Nearly all of the Churches of God today are following a Jewish calendar for the very same reason. They are totally missing the point that Jesus said not to do what they do — and what they are doing is following their *Talmud*, not God's *Torah*.

It is in the *Talmud* that the Seder Dinner is found. In the *Torah* God gave instructions that at the Passover they are to eat lamb (or goat), bitter herbs, and unleavened bread (Exo. 12:8). The Seder Dinner is a ceremonial process that includes parsley dipped in salt water to represent the tears of Israel in bondage, an apple dish called charoset that represents the mortar between the bricks (symbolic of their bondage), horseradish as the bitter herbs, and four cups of wine, each representing a different element in their celebration. After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. they began adding a shankbone of the lamb to the seder plate because they couldn't sacrifice the lambs at the temple any longer. At some later date they added a roasted egg. We're not even going to try to go there in explanation of what it is supposed to represent (considering the world's practice today of celebrating bunnies laying colored eggs at Easter time—a totally pagan practice).

The Seder Dinner is broken into several steps as the items on the seder plate are explained and partaken of. The story of the exodus is recounted in answer to four questions from the children. The four cups of wine are introduced one at a time throughout the course of the ceremony. At some point in time, a practice of hiding a piece of unleavened bread, called the Afikomen, was added to the service. For the Jews, this represents the coming Messiah. For the Churches of God who are keeping a Christian Haggadah, the Afikomen represents Christ. Throughout the entire ceremony, the Jewish practice is to have an unoccupied place set at the table for Elijah. At some point during the service, someone goes to the door and looks out to see if Elijah is coming.

While this practice of keeping the Seder Dinner has been going on for a very long time, with elements added along the way, can anyone find all this spelled out anywhere in the Bible? No, you can't, because it is not found there. It is found in the *Talmud*, not the *Torah*.

If we are obedient to God, then our Passovers should contain only the elements that God defined in Exodus — the lamb, the blood of the lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. The wine is added to represent the blood of the lamb that was on the doorposts of that original Passover. The drinking of blood is, of course, forbidden, so wine is used symbolically to represent it. These are the elements required by God to mark the first Passover and the same elements today represent Christ's sacrifice in 30 A.D.

On Passover we partake of the wine to represent the "saving" blood that was originally put on the doorposts and later was shed by the Lamb of God for us.

Luke indicates that there were two cups of wine at the Lord's Supper, but it is only the second cup that Jesus said to drink in memory of him. Later Paul refers to it as "this cup." We partake of the unleavened bread to represent the haste with which Israel was brought out of bondage and later to represent Christ's broken body. We partake of the bitter herbs to represent the bitterness of Israel in bondage and later to represent the bitterness of man's sinful nature that required Christ's ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. We partake of the lamb to represent the original sacrifice, the blood from which saved the lives of Israel the night the death angel passed over their homes. This same lamb represented (pointed to) the Lamb of God who would later die to make a way for all to come to God. After that ultimate sacrifice, we partake of the lamb to commemorate the sacrifice that Christ made for us.

Many believe that when Jesus held the last supper with his disciples, he changed the eating of the lamb to the bread. There is nothing in any of the gospel accounts or in the writings of the apostles to back up this claim. At best, we can only call it a tradition of the present church. There are no scriptures that tell us to stop partaking of the lamb at Passover. Before Christ, it pointed forward to his coming. After Christ, it commemorates the sacrifice he made.

We've already explained that the bread Jesus said to take as his body was regular bread, not unleavened bread. We can't partake of regular leavened bread on Passover, but we can partake of the lamb. The only instructions we have for what God wants us to do on Passover are found in Exodus. Jesus said he did not come to change the law (Matt. 5:17-19). So, if he did not change it, God's instructions from Exodus still stand. Any teachings from any church group that indicates otherwise, or teaches that Jesus changed anything, are in direct opposition to what Jesus himself said in Matthew.

The Jews stopped sacrificing lambs when the temple was destroyed. All animal sacrifice was ended at the same time. God allowed the destruction of the temple because of the sins of his people. He scattered them all over the world and among many nations where they could no longer profane his name with their practices. That does not mean that those who are trying to be obedient to God's laws should follow their practices or live as they do — then or now.

If God's Word says to do something, we ought to make every effort to obey, even if we can't do it perfectly. God never changed his instructions for Passover to a shankbone or to a roasted egg. Human thinking did that.

The prophets tell us that all things will be restored when Christ returns. The temple will be rebuilt and Jerusalem will again become the mountain (home) of the Lord. All people will go up to the mountain of the Lord to learn his ways.

But for those of us who already know, even if only in part, ought we not to obey the instructions we have already been given, whether the temple has been rebuilt or not. To do otherwise indicates that we think the world and the ways of

the world are more right than God. To replace the lamb with a shankbone, a roasted egg or unleavened bread is following the dictates of men, not God's commands.

Why the Biblical Service?

Today we understand imperfectly. Those who interpret and establish doctrine from imperfectly understood scriptures are guilty of forming God in their own image and fall into the category of children of the devil rather than children of God.

With so much evidence to point out that the Lord's Supper was not the Passover, we are grievously if we conduct only a Lord's Supper ceremony in place of the Passover. God gave the Passover to be observed forever as long as there are generations on the earth. He gave instructions for how and what to do. To eliminate God's instructions and to follow only the example found in the New Testament is not being obedient to God, nor is it what Jesus did.

As our understanding is still "looking through the glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12), in order to be obedient to God, we must follow everything that is written without adding to it or taking away from it. The Jewish Seder Dinner is an object lesson in "adding to" God's Word and to conduct only a footwashing, bread and wine service is an object lesson in "taking from it."

Since we know that those who are obedient to God are the only ones who will enter the Kingdom and be called the children of God when Christ returns, it behooves us to strive at all times to be obedient to God — every Word of God. That means every word of the Old Testament as well. We have to do this to the best of our ability in the world and culture in which we live. If we are, let it be on the side of including everything found in the Word of God, not in making our own choices about which portions of God's Word we want to obey.

That is why you'll find the Biblical Service begins with the Passover dinner from Exodus and concludes with the bread and wine from the Lord's Supper. It does not include anything that cannot be found in the scriptures and shies away from anything that might be seen as the "traditions of men."

* * *

Included on this website are three different services for Passover. The first is a Lord's Supper service following the model practiced by most Churches of God today. The second is the Christian Messianic Haggadah of William Dankenbring for those who still believe this is the correct way to observe Passover. The third is a Biblical Service and includes only the elements found in scripture for the Passover and includes the elements of the Lord's Supper during or after the meal, as we believe the Lord's Supper can be partaken of at any time.

Also included is an article on how to prepare for the Passover and two files with recipes for Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. There are also recipes included in the Christian Messianic Haggadah booklet.

CLOSING HYMN #119

“He Lives”

Alfred H. Ackley, 20th cent.

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.
I see his hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer
And, just the time I need Him, He's always near.
He lives (*He lives*), He lives (*He lives*), Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives (*He lives*), He lives (*He lives*), salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

In all the world around me I see His loving care,
And tho' my heart grows weary, I never will despair.
I know that He is leading thro' all the stormy blast;
The day of His appearing will come at last.
He lives (*He lives*), He lives (*He lives*), Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives (*He lives*), He lives (*He lives*), salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christians, lift up your voice and sing
Eternal halelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find,
None other is so loving, so good and kind.
He lives (*He lives*), He lives (*He lives*), Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives (*He lives*), He lives (*He lives*), salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

CLOSING WORDS (*In Unison*)

Go your way rejoicing in God's continuing presence
And sharing the gifts you have received from God.
Meditate on whatever is true, honorable, and just;
Think of whatever is pure, lovely, and gracious.
The peace of God that passes all understanding
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.