



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Spring 2015

Christ Our Passover

**Who, what, is the Passover? What is its history?
Should Christians keep the Passover today? If so, how and why?**



Passover is the religious festival that celebrates the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians. The term is derived from the Hebrew *pasach*, which means "to pass over."

The Lamb of God

In the book of Revelation, Christ is called "the Lamb" more than two dozen times, and is symbolically portrayed as a lamb "that was slain" yet lives (Revelation 5:6, 12). The innumerable multitude of Revelation 7 is identified as "those who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (verse 14). The end-time saints overcome the devil "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (12:11). The 144,000 of Revelation 14 are those "who follow the Lamb." They are "the redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb" (verse 4).

The New Jerusalem is called "the Lamb's wife" (21:10). The "names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" are inscribed on the city's twelve foundations (verse 14). The city has no temple, and no need for the light of the sun or moon, for "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (verse 22), and "the Lamb is its light" (verse 23). The "throne of God and of the Lamb" are in the city (22:1, 3), and only those whose names are in "the Lamb's book of life" may enter through its gates (21:27).

The early church, with roots firmly embedded in the soil of Jewish religion, could not have failed to realize the significance of the title "Lamb of God," or of portraying Christ as a sacrificial lamb. The lamb was the dominant animal of Israel's sacrificial system. It was associated particularly with the festival that began the year's holyday cycle—the Passover. All the adult members of the earliest church had heard the story of how God used the blood of lambs to protect the firstborn of their forefathers during the night of terror in Egypt. Most had come to Jerusalem every year for as long as they could remember to commemorate that awesome event.

Every year, the people would come with their lambs. Every year, the sacrificial rite would begin in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan. A priest in the Temple would kill the first lamb at about 3:00 PM. The killing of the lambs

continued without interruption for about three hours, the entire period known as *ben ha arbayim*, "between the two evenings" (Exodus 12:6).

The lambs were quickly prepared and cooked in preparation for the Feast that would continue far into the night. During that "night to be much observed" (Exodus 12:42), the elders would recount the story of the Exodus once again. The people would think of how glorious it must have been for those who had served the Egyptians for so many years. No doubt, many related the story of their forefathers to their own plight as Jews living under Roman dominion. They looked for the day when God would once again set His hand to liberate His people. They looked for the day when a "new Moses" would arrive on the scene. They knew the prophets had declared it: Messiah would come!

But when? How much longer before the people, like their ancestors at the edge of the Red Sea, would "see the salvation of the LORD" (Exodus 14:13)?

Messiah Appears at Last

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Did Christ *Really* Die On a Friday and Rise On a Sunday?

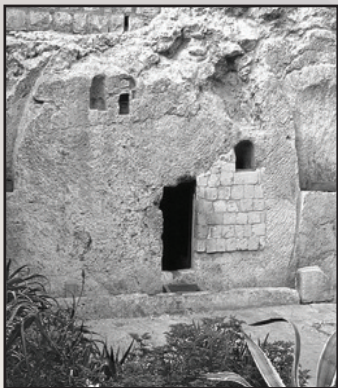
Shortly before His crucifixion, the murder-plotting religious leaders of Jesus' day demanded a "sign" that He was, indeed, the Messiah. He gave them a sign—a sign that religionists *disbelieve to this very day*: "For AS Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so [in like manner] shall the Son of man be three days *and* three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39–40).

Most of Christendom traditionally believes that Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon (Good Friday), was placed in the tomb before sundown Friday night, rested in the tomb on the Sabbath (Saturday), and was resurrected on Sunday morning at dawn. Shockingly, either that tradition is *false*, or you have no Savior!

The sign Jesus gave was not *just* the fact of His death or even of His resurrection—no, not at all—but the **LENGTH OF TIME** He would be in the heart of the earth—the grave—before being resurrected. Yet millions deny that sign! Was Jesus mistaken? Did He lie? Do the math! Can you honestly squeeze 72 hours between Friday and Sunday? Can you explain this sign to others *right from your own Bible*? Prepare to be surprised!

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DEADLINE for the *next* issue is May 15th 2015.

We look forward to seeing you soon... *in print*!

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Passover, continued from page 1

By the time Jesus' ministry began, many false messiahs had come and gone. Nevertheless, the people still expected the real Messiah to come at any time. And when He came, many believed He was the Messiah.

John the Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and had done his job well. He had prepared the way before Christ by calling upon the people to repent of their sins, and by identifying Jesus as the Messiah. Luke informs us that John "went into all the region around the Jordan" with his message of repentance (Luke 3:3). Matthew tells us that "Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him [John], and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5-6).

John's influence was great. Many recognized him as a true prophet of God. When he identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), and testified that Jesus "is the Son of God" (verse 34), John's audience listened—and many believed.

John's influence, then, was one reason many believed Jesus was the promised Messiah. Another reason was that many had heard of the unusual events surrounding both the birth of Jesus and the birth of John (Luke 1:63-66; 2:8-18). A third reason—perhaps the most important of all—was the many miraculous signs that affirmed Jesus as the promised Messiah. One sign, which occurred a short while before Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem, was particularly outstanding.

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem

Before His death, Jesus caused quite a stir in Judea. He had raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44), and word of this marvelous event had spread throughout the region (12:9, 17). For this reason, a great multitude that was in Jerusalem for the Passover went out to meet Him as He rode into the city on a young donkey (verses 12-19). They knew He was the Messiah, for only the Messiah could raise the dead. Besides, the stories—now over three decades old—of angels appearing to shepherds and directing them to the newborn Christ-child were still circulating, as were the stories of the dozens of healings and exorcisms Jesus had performed over the preceding three years or so.

Now the Messiah comes to Jerusalem! Was this not what the people had expected? Had not the prophets declared that the Davidic King would establish His throne in the Holy City? At last, He's here. Jerusalem welcomes her King.

But all were not pleased with the Messiah's coming. By the time He arrived, the chief priests and the Pharisees had already contrived a plan to have Him put to death. They plotted to put Lazarus to death as well, for his resurrection had caused many to believe in Jesus.

In the end, their plan worked. Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned to death. But before He was arrested and taken away, Jesus had one last meal with His disciples. It was the night portion of the fourteenth of Nisan, just hours before Jesus' arrest. "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," He said to His disciples, "for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:15-16).

Jesus knew His hour had come. Soon He would be mocked and scourged and put to death. But His teaching ministry was not over yet. He had some final instructions for His disciples.

Jesus Institutes New Testament Passover

"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded" (John 13:1-5).

What was the purpose of this act? What lesson was the Master illustrating when He stooped down to wash His servants' feet? "So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them'" (verses 12-17).

By taking on the role of a servant, the Master illustrates the humility His disciples must have. He also sets an example for them by doing for them what He expects them to do for each other.

Notice that by taking the bread and wine in memory of Jesus, we proclaim His death "till He comes." The followers of Christ will be keeping this custom until Christ returns!

Now, back to the story....

Jesus Is Put to Death

The chief priests and Pharisees were successful in pulling off their plot to kill Jesus. On the fourteenth of Nisan, the day the Jews killed the Passover lambs, Jesus was led to Golgotha, where He was crucified.

Many were sorely disappointed. They had been so certain that this man was the Messiah, but now their hopes were destroyed. Rather than Jesus leading a revolt and overthrowing the Romans, the Romans led Him to the outskirts of town and executed Him. This could hardly be the Messiah, they thought.

The problem was that they expected Messiah to lead a successful campaign against the Romans and restore Israel to national greatness. They thought the revolt would begin then and there. That's what the people were hoping for when they took up palm branches and went out to meet Jesus with cries of "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel" (John 12:13).

The people were not looking for a "religious" experience, and "Hosanna" was not a feel-good "religious" term. As David H. Stern rightly notes, "Actually, 'Hoshia' na' is a prayer addressed to the Messiah, quoted from Psalm 118:25-26; Psalm 118 is Messianic throughout....The implication is that the crowds recognized and honored Yeshua [Jesus] as the Messiah by shouting, 'Please, deliver us, Son of David!'—'Son of David' is a Messianic title...and the crowds wanted their Messiah to deliver them from the Roman overlords" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 63).

No doubt, many of Jesus' followers and admirers were ready to follow Him into battle. They knew the prophets had foretold Messiah's victory over Israel's enemies, and they were willing and ready to participate in His campaign against the Roman overlords and their Jewish minions. Redemption and salvation were not "religious" words. These terms pertained to the deliverance of Israel from Roman dominion and the restoration of national greatness.

We can understand the people's—especially the disciples'—fear and disappointment once Jesus was led away and put to death. It appeared that He wasn't the Messiah after all, though He had healed the sick and afflicted, cast out demons, and raised the dead. A great prophet and man of God? Yes. Messiah? No. How could He be? After all, Messiah was supposed to win the battle against evil—and there is no victory for a dead man!

Or is there?

This is where the people's understanding of Messiah's mission was lacking. Little did they know that the key to understanding Christ's purpose for coming into the world was hidden in the Feast that was about to commence—the Passover.

Jesus "Fulfills" the Law and the Prophets

Before looking at the profound meaning of the Passover, let's briefly look at what Jesus said about His mission—what He did and did not come to do.

Early in His ministry, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [to bring to fullness]. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled [accomplished]" (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus did not abolish the Ten Commandments, as some think. He magnified them (Isaiah 42:21) by exposing the erroneous interpretations that had been attached to them and bringing out their full meaning. In fact, He brought to light the fullness of all previous revelation. That's what He means when He says He came "to fulfill" the Old Testament Scriptures ("the Law and the Prophets").

The disciples failed to understand the extent to which the Scriptures pertained to the Messiah until after Jesus' resurrection. Only then did they come to understand how Jesus "fulfilled" the Law and the Prophets. "Then He [the risen Christ] said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might

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comprehend the Scriptures” (Luke 24:44–45). That’s how Jesus “fulfilled” the Law and the Prophets. He didn’t do it by abolishing commandments that were in force before Moses and were to remain in force as long as there are human beings on this planet.

Earlier that day, Jesus had said to two others, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” Then, “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (verses 25–26).

Once Jesus enlightened His disciples by giving them the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) and opening their minds to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), they were soon able to see Christ throughout the Law and the Prophets. At last they could see that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem just a few days before His death was indeed a “triumphal entry.” He accomplished His mission. He fulfilled the Scriptures. And now it was up to the disciples to proclaim to the world that Jesus is the Messiah, that “He is risen,” and that He will come again in power, as King of kings and Lord of lords, and establish His everlasting Kingdom upon this earth.

The Scriptures took on wonderful new meaning—and so did the annual Festivals and holydays. The apostles and disciples, with the whole church, could now see Christ in all the institutions of the Old Testament. That’s why Paul, writing in the mid-50s A.D., could say, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7), and expect the Corinthians to understand.

An Amazing Prophecy

Let’s now turn our attention to the Passover instructions God gave to Israel as they prepared to depart their homes and leave Egypt behind. “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father....Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year....Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the first month. Then the whole congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night... It is the LORD’S Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt... Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:1–13).

The Jews who came out to meet Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem just before the Passover Feast had no idea that this familiar text of Scripture was prophetic in nature, and that it held the key to understanding the Messiah’s mission.

Notice how the various components of this instruction perfectly symbolize the Messiah and His work of redemption: The lamb without blemish symbolizes Christ, who was without sin. Jesus was killed on the fourteenth day of the first month, the same day the Passover lamb was killed. Christ died at the “ninth hour” of the day (Matthew 27:45–50; Mark 15:34–37; Luke 23:44–46), or 3:00 PM, precisely the time the first lamb of the Passover sacrifice was killed. (The phrase translated “at twilight”—*in the evening* in the KJV—in Exodus 12:6 is *ben ha arbayim*, which means “between the evenings,” and refers to the period between 3:00 PM, the “ninth hour” and sunset.) The Israelites were required to put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their homes and eat the flesh of the sacrificial animal that night. Only then would their firstborn be saved from death and set free from bondage. Similarly, because of Christ’s broken body and shed blood—His self-sacrifice—God delivers us from the bondage of sin and saves us from eternal death.

Foreseeing His death and resurrection and alluding to His redemptive work as the sacrificial Lamb of God, Jesus said, “If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world....so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:51, 57).

The Jews of Jesus’ day could not have known that every year, at the Passover, they pictured the Messiah’s mission; that the story they had heard so many times was prophetic, and accurately foreshadowed not only the Messiah’s death, but also the very month, day of the month, and time of day He would die. But now, in hindsight, the disciples of Jesus and thousands of others could see with great clarity how Christ fulfilled the Scriptures. Now they could reflect upon the teachings of Jesus and events of His life, and read the Law and the Prophets under an entirely new light. Now they could observe those ancient Feast days with a completely new perspective.

With his new Christ-centered view of an ancient text and a very old Festival, Peter writes, “[Y]ou were not redeemed with corruptible things...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without

blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19). Declaring that “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us,” the apostle Paul adds, “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

The life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the “Christ-event” for short—not only transformed the lives of the disciples, but also brought profound new meaning to centuries-old practices such as the Passover and other annual Festivals.

A Christ-Centered Passover

Consider for a moment how the Christ-event turned the disciples’ world upside down.

First, as they came to the fullness of truth regarding the divine identity of Jesus, the disciples had to redefine, but not abandon, the strict monotheism they inherited from their fathers. God is one! So says Israel’s sacred creed (Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19). But with the new understanding that (1) God sent Jesus, and (2) Jesus is God, it was necessary to redefine the meaning of “one” as it applies to the Deity. The transformation in thinking had been made by the time John penned his Gospel (John 1:1–14; 10:30; 14:7–11). God is still one, but the one Divinity consists of more than one Person.

Second, the old prejudices toward Samaritans and the uncircumcised had to be put aside as a new vision of the “people of God” came into focus (Acts 10:28,34,35; 15:7–9; Galatians 3:29; 6:16; Ephesians 3:1–6). The new “Israel of God” extended well beyond the borders of the Promised Land. Spiritual principles underlying institutions such as circumcision, the priesthood, and the ceremonial-sacrificial system—all connected to the Land and the Temple—were applied to the expanding international church.

Third, the time-honored Festivals and holydays God had given to Israel in the time of Moses took on new meaning. No longer were they only Exodus-centered memorials or harvest festivals suited to Israel’s agricultural climate. The coming of Christ brought their full and universal significance to light.

The first Feast to be understood in Christological terms was the first one of the year—the Passover Festival, which includes the Days of Unleavened Bread. Let’s see how the Christ-event enlightens us as to the profound meaning of this Festival.

As we have seen, Christ Himself is our Passover. Rather than offer an animal sacrifice in memory of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, we commemorate Christ’s self-sacrifice by taking the symbols of His broken body and shed blood each year. We also wash each other’s feet at that time, just as He did when He instituted this memorial.

Before we take the bread and wine, we examine ourselves to make sure we do not take the symbols in an unworthy manner. We realize that we are renewing the covenant we agreed to at baptism. Therefore we maintain an atmosphere of solemnity when we come to the service, and remind attendants that only the baptized may partake of the bread and wine (though others may participate in the foot-washing portion of the service if they wish).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us that the Heavenly Father has delivered us from the bondage of sin through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God. We do not gradually remove leavened products from our homes during the seven days of the Festival, so technically the feast does not picture “putting sin out” over a lifetime. The blood of Christ has removed our sins, and the seven-day festival pictures the ideal of living sinless lives in Christ. However, in actuality we do not live sinless lives. Therefore the Festival’s high ideal, while not technically picturing the gradual process of discarding sinful practices, does underscore the importance of putting sin out of our lives as soon as it is discovered.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is not just about refraining from leavened products for seven days. The law states, “[S]even days you must eat unleavened bread” (Leviticus 23:6). By eating unleavened bread for seven days, the Israelites were reminded of how their forefathers came out of Egypt in haste (Exodus 12:33–34). For the followers of Christ, the Feast pictures the solution to the sin problem. We are “sinless” only to the degree in which we put Christ into our lives. He is the Source of our spiritual sustenance. He is the Bread that came down from heaven; eternal life comes through continuously “feeding” on Him (John 6:57–58).

“Let Us Keep the Feast!”

Self-examination should be an ongoing practice, but we should give it special attention as the Passover season approaches. In preparation for this year’s Festival, why not do the following:

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Read each of the Gospel accounts of Christ's last supper with His disciples, His agony in the garden, and His suffering, death, and resurrection. As you read, put yourself in the picture; keep in mind that He suffered and died on *your* behalf.

Read the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), and think deeply about each command, how it is worded, how it applies to you. Let God's Law be a mirror for your life. Examine yourself under the light of each commandment. Be honest. Confess your sins to God, and think of things you can do to avoid committing those sins in the future.

Immediately after reading and meditating on the Ten Commandments, read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Ask yourself how you measure up as you carefully read each point Christ discusses.

Whatever you do, don't neglect prayer. Make Psalm 51 your prayer. Ask God to help you see within the darkened corners of your own mind. Ask Him to remove the blinders so that you can see yourself as He sees you. Then ask Him to blot out your transgressions, wash and cleanse you, purge you, and create a clean heart within you.

Finally, read Romans 8, and just believe what it says. Then you will truly be ready to keep the Feast. "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

What You Should Know About the Days of Unleavened Bread

This section is for those who are new to the *Church of God International*. It is also for those who have been with the church for a while but need a refresher on the basic why's and how-to's concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread, a Festival God originally gave to ancient Israel, and whose practice continues today.

To those who are not accustomed to the practice, observing the Days of Unleavened Bread can seem "strange." These days, casting out leaven from one's home and avoiding it for a week, sounds radical—especially for a "religious" custom.

Leavening is a substance used to ferment dough, causing it to rise or "puff up." Without it, bread is flat, hard, sometimes even "rubbery." These leavening agents include yeast, baking powder, and baking soda.

So what is this week of flat bread all about? Why is this Festival celebrated by the *Church of God International*?

Why Israel Kept It

Thousands of years ago, God freed the Israelites from terrible bondage and slavery in Egypt. This divine act of mercy and grace was central to Israel's history. The Israelites were to reflect on this monumental event and remember God's faithful, loving hand in action. It came to symbolize God's salvation for His people.

The night before the Israelites left for the Promised Land, after God's horrifying plague against the firstborn of Egypt, the Egyptian Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested" (Exodus 12:31).

Because God caused all the firstborn of Egypt to be struck dead, the Egyptians wasted no time in begging the Israelites to leave the country. They had had enough. It was time for the Israelites to pack up their belongings and go. "So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing" (verse 34).

God therefore chose to use bread without yeast to remind Israel of her deliverance from Egypt. He said, "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt" (verse 17).

Why the Church of God International Keeps It

Because the Bible commands it (Leviticus 23:6–8)! It's quite possible—and in some cases probable—that your ancestral divisions did not come out of Egypt with Moses and Aaron. Perhaps you, the reader, may be a descendant of cruel Egyptian slave masters who enforced the Pharaoh's decree that the Israelites make bricks without straw. Why, then, would you celebrate this ancient Feast?

The apostle Paul saw deeper, more significant meaning in the "Jewish" Feast. In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul addressed a problem of sexual immorality, a case in which a man had "his father's wife" (1 Corinthians 5:1). In their pride, rather than putting the unrepentant, immoral man out of the church, the Corinthians tolerated this wicked sin in their midst. Paul used "Unleavened Bread" language in his corrective words to

the largely Gentile church: "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth" (verses 6–8).

Paul compared "yeast," or leavening, with "malice and wickedness," or sin.

Jesus likewise spoke of sin and false teaching in terms of leaven. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees," He warned (Matthew 16:6,11; cf. verse 12; Luke 12:1).

The correlation between sin and leaven is clearly evident when read back into the Exodus account. On the night before the Israelites left Egypt, they were to sacrifice a Passover lamb and eat it. The blood of the lamb was to be put on the tops and sides of their doorframes on the houses wherein they ate. This lamb's blood, representing the blood of "Christ, our Passover lamb," protected Israel's firstborn from the same fate as Egypt's. When the blood covers and protects us from divine retribution, we are expected to rid ourselves of sin—to repent.

This is taught in the example set all the way back in Moses' time, and we should take it to heart. As Paul wrote, "Now these things [surrounding the Exodus] occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

Here is How You Can Keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread

It is the long-held tradition of the *Church of God International* and other churches of God to literally keep the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread as commanded by God in the books of the Law. If this has not yet been your practice, you may find it spiritually energizing. It can help you to be mindful of sin and the importance of casting it out of your life while under the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Before the Feast begins (we have holyday calendars available upon request), get rid of all the leavened products in your home. These include items such as bread, cookies, cakes, and anything else that contains leavening agents.

Eat "unleavened" bread each day throughout the Feast, as God told the Israelites to "eat bread made without yeast" (Exodus 12:18) throughout the seven days; "you must eat unleavened bread" (verse 20; cf. Leviticus 23:6).

You can bake your own "bread made without yeast" (you might want to get a palatable recipe from someone), or you can go to the local grocery store and buy Passover matzos, Ry-Krisps, Triscuits, or Wheat Thins Original (check the ingredients to be sure).

If possible in your area, attend worship services with others who are keeping the Feast. The *Church of God International* always welcomes visitors and newcomers to its services. The first and seventh days of the Feast are annual Sabbaths, distinct from the weekly Sabbath day of rest. Through Moses, God told the Israelites, "On the first day [of the Feast] hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work... And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work" (Leviticus 23:7,8). On these days the church holds special worship services to celebrate God's calling us (spiritual Israelites) out of sin (Egypt) and into a new life in Christ (Promised Land).

Do not neglect the spiritual dimension of the Feast, which is the fulfillment of the physical. God's primary concern does not ultimately deal with bread, crackers, and going to church on the right days. Certain physical "rites" or "ceremonies" commanded of God are important and indeed required of Christians, but we should not let them become empty, shallow, and vain. There should be substance undergirding the form.

Be especially mindful of Christ's powerful, efficacious, and loving sacrifice for us at this time of year. He died for our sins. Only by applying that historic sacrifice to our lives can our sins be eradicated, washed away.

But if we claim to be "under the blood," then we must continue to live our lives with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. If we don't, and instead live with the yeast of malice and wickedness, then we are "crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace" (Hebrews 6:6).

Let's use the spring holyday season to honor God and renew our covenant with His Son. By accepting Jesus' ultimate gift of grace, and by obeying all His commands, you can apply the blood of the Lamb to the doorframe of your life.

The Double Festival

The Passover was the first of all the annual Feasts, and historically and religiously it was the most important of all. It was called both the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the two really forming a

Passover continued on page 7

Jonah: Fact or Fish Tale?

Among the minor prophets, Jonah can be considered one of the more controversial books.



Mike James

There are a number of interpretations of the book which include mythology, Midrash, and symbolic. There are some who argue Jonah should be read as a literal historical account.

Others believe the story is an allegory. An allegory is a story we should not take literally, but we can learn spiritual lessons from the details the story provides.

Another view about Jonah is, it is a parabolic story. The idea of a parabolic story came about due to the fact so many details of the book being an allegory do not fit the interpretation put on them.

The parabolic idea concentrates on the story as a whole. So some of it could be historical and allegorical at the same time. The purpose of this article will be to look at some of the reasons for the historical view and some of the reasons for the allegorical/parabolic view. I will provide my views on these interpretations. I should also say I believe in the historicity of the book of Jonah.

One reason for the allegorical/parabolic interpretation stems from the frequent use of the Hebrew word *gadol* in the book of Jonah. The word means “great,” and it is used in the following scriptures:

Jonah 1:2; 3:2–3; 4:11—Here the term is used to describe the city of Nineveh.

Jonah 1:4; 1:12—Here the word is used to describe the storm and wind.

Jonah 1:10, 16—Here the term is used for the fear of the sailors.

Jonah 2:1—Here the fish is called “great.”

Jonah 3:5, 7—Here individuals in Nineveh are called “great.”

Jonah 4:1—Here Jonah’s anger is described with the word.

Now the reason this supports the allegorical/parabolic view is because the biblical Hebrew use of adjectives (like “great”) is very sparse. It does not make sense that this adjective would be used so often in such a short book. Using an adjective like “great” implies the events in the book are “larger than life” (great). So those who hold this view believe the author’s initial audience would understand the story as some sort of parable rather than a true history.(1)

Now I can understand the logic of this reasoning, but the sparse use of Hebrew adjectives does not seem to me to be an overwhelming reason for believing the story is not historical.

A second reason for the allegorical/parabolic interpretation relates to parallel passages in Jonah and other parts of the Bible. Some examples of this include the following:

Jonah 4:2 with Exodus 34:6–7 and Exodus 14:12

Jonah 2:4 with Psalm 42:8

Jonah 4:5; 4:9 with Psalm 31:7, 23

Jonah 4:8 with I Kings 19:4

When you examine these scriptures closely, you find similar language or thoughts between the Jonah scriptures and the scriptures in other parts of the Bible. The idea here is these parallelisms are suggestive of a conscious literary ploy by the author of Jonah.(2) In other words, the author used these scriptures in other parts of the Bible to help write the book of Jonah.

Once again, there is logic behind this idea dealing with the parallelisms, but in my mind it is another weak point. The prophet Jonah would have been familiar with other holy scriptures, and I see no reason why he would not use them to help him write his own book. There are numerous examples of other biblical writers using other scriptures in their books.

A third reason some disbelieve in the historicity of the book of Jonah stems from the incident with the fish. Those who believe the story is an allegory or parable cite the story of a man being swallowed by a fish as unbelievable.

I do understand how it is difficult for many to believe Jonah could have been swallowed by a fish. It is even more difficult to believe he could survive in the fish for three days and three nights. But there is evidence this could happen. While the throats of most whales are too narrow to swallow a man, the sperm whale could. A.J. Wilson (*Princeton Theological Review*, 25

by Mike James

[1941], 636) records the case of a man swept overboard by a harpooned sperm whale in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands. The whale was eventually killed and cut apart. After three days, the sailor was found in the animal’s stomach, unconscious. He was successfully revived, although the skin of his face, neck, and hands was bleached white by the whale’s gastric juices.(3) But we must remember we are dealing with a supernatural God. If Christians believe Christ rose from the dead, why would it be so difficult to believe He could “prepare” a fish to swallow Jonah for a time and spew him out? There are fish (whales/sharks) large enough to do this, and I believe God can perform miracles.

Some believe the book was written in the 5th century B.C., which would not fit with the belief in the historical Jonah of the 8th century B.C. Reasons for this view include a belief Jonah borrowed from Joel, and those who believe this believe Joel had a later date. They also believe the language of Jonah displays several Aramaisms and modes of expression not found in the classical Hebrew of Jonah. Both of these reasons have a number of arguments against them.(4)

Another reason for not believing the book of Jonah is historical is due to the lack of historical evidence for a large act of repentance in Nineveh. Once again, this does not seem like an overwhelming reason to me. It is possible we have not found evidence yet due to the fact it is still buried. Many biblical truths that scoffers did not believe have been verified by archaeological evidence after doubters cast doubt. The Assyrians may have destroyed the record of this after they started to slide back into their sinful ways. The fact they repented does not mean they became followers of God; the repentance could have been a short-lived event, so there would be no reason to put it into their historical record.(5)

As we now turn to reasons to believe in the historicity of Jonah, we can begin by addressing the last reason above why some believe Jonah was an allegory or parabolic. It seems outrageous that the Assyrians would repent to a foreign God of their enemies, but let us look at a possibility for their repentance. At the time Jonah could have gone to Nineveh (800–750 B.C.), Assyria was in a weaker state between the death of Adad-nirari III in 782 B.C. and Tiglath-pileser III in 745 B.C.(6) Assyria was battling for their existence with the mountain tribes of Urartu, Mannai, and Madai. These tribes were to the north of Assyria, and they were able to push their borders to within 100 miles of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh.(7) Since the book of Jonah could have been written in the 8th century B.C., it’s possible to believe the Assyrians may have repented when Jonah prophesied to them because they feared being defeated by the mountain tribes.

Another important reason for believing in the historicity of Jonah pertains to internal biblical evidence for Jonah being a historic figure. In 2 Kings 14:25, we read about a Jonah, son of Amittai, which corroborates with what Jonah 1:1 says about the author of Jonah. The timeframe in 2 Kings 14:23–25 mentioning Jereboam II as King of Israel would fit with Jonah’s timeframe, which seems to be before Assyria conquered Israel. Second Kings also mentions Jonah being in Gath Hopher. Gath Hopher appears to be part of the northern kingdom of Israel, based upon Joshua 19:13. Someone could, of course, argue the writer of Jonah took advantage of the name Jonah already in the scriptures, but we can’t prove this definitively one way or the other.

Matthew 12:38–41 and Luke 11:29–32 also back the historicity of Jonah. Both of these New Testament scriptures quote Jesus as providing Jonah’s time in the belly of the fish as being the only sign He would provide that He was the Messiah. This makes it difficult to not believe Jonah is history if you truly believe Jesus was the real Son of God. Some argue these are not the actual words of Jesus, but I believe this will lead to other issues in the belief in Scripture at all if you hold that opinion.

Some also argue it would not make sense for God to send Jonah to an enemy of Israel to preach. At first glance, that would make sense. But under further consideration, we see other examples of historical note where other prophets preached to foreigners in foreign lands. In 1 Kings 17:7–24, we have an example of Elijah bearing witness to a woman who lived in a land that was an enemy to Israel. Another example is found in 2 Kings 8:7–17, where Elisha bears witness to the King of Aram in Damascus. Amos also shows God had an interest in the pagan nations (Amos 1:3–2:16; 9:7, 12).

Another point on the validity of the history of Jonah stems from the description in Jonah 3:3. In Jonah 3:3, Nineveh is described as a city requiring three days to walk through. According to Diodoros Siculus, (1st century B.C.), the circumference of Nineveh was 60 miles, and many claiming for the historicity claim the three days refers to the journey around the walls.(8) Modern archaeology has discovered the inner wall of the city had

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

only a length of eight miles.(9) Today many who believe in the historicity of the book believe the three days' journey relates to "Greater Ninevah," which included Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah (Nimrud), and Resen.(10) This interpretation receives strong support from Genesis 10:11–12.(11)

The mourning which took place in Nineveh (Jonah 3:7–8) does make sense from a historical perspective. Herodotus provides evidence of the use of animals for mourning by the Persians.(12) Some argue the example Herodotus provides is not analogous to Jonah's example, because in Jonah, the example was for repentance, and Herodotus cited an example for mourning.(13) But in all nations, the outward signs of penitential mourning are the same as those of mourning for the dead.(14)

One final point on the historical side deals with the plant that provided Jonah shade in Jonah's fourth chapter. There is a plant (shrub) called elkerua, which grows in sandy places and has broad leaves that can provide shadow. It is known to shoot up to a considerable height in a very few days.(15) Again, in Jonah, this growth happened much more quickly, but I believe a supernatural God could do this. Those who argue against the historicity of Jonah cannot prove their case. None of the arguments they provide are very significant in my opinion. Ω

(1) *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 3*, David Noel Freedman, Doubleday: New York, 1992, pg. 938.
(2) Ibid, pg. 939.
(3) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 2*, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982, pg. 115.
(4) *The Problem of the Book of Jonah*, G. Ch. Aalders, www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jonah_aalders.pdf. pg. 5
(5) *Jonah and the Whale: Fact or Fictional Fish Story?*, At A Crossroads, www.atacrossroads.net/jonah-and-the-whale-fact-or-fictional-fish-story/.
(6) *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7*, Frank E. Gaebelein, Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985, pg. 361.
(7) Ibid
(8) *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 7*, Frank E. Gaebelein, Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985 pg. 380.
(9) Ibid.
(10) Ibid.
(11) Ibid.
(12) *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 10*, Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, Massachusetts, 2001, pg. 276.
(13) Ibid.
(14) Ibid.
(15) Ibid, pg. 280.

Passover, continued from page 5

double Festival.

The Passover was celebrated on the first month of the religious year, on the fourteenth of Nisan (our March/April), and commemorated the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt and the establishment of Israel as a nation by God's redemptive act. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the day after the Passover and lasted seven days (Leviticus 23:5–8). This combined Feast was one of the three Feasts that all male Jews who were physically able and ceremonially clean were required by Mosaic Law to attend (Exodus 23:17; Deuteronomy 16:16). The other two were the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These were known as the pilgrimage Festivals; on all of them special sacrifices were offered, varying according to the character of the Festival (Numbers 28–29).

Theologically the Passover finds its heart in the doctrine of propitiation. The Lord entered Egypt bent on judgment (Exodus 12:12); but, seeing the blood, He passed over that house completely at peace with those who were sheltering there. His wrath was assuaged by the blood of the lamb [*The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, page 350]. Ω

God's Holydays 2015

New Testament Passover
April 2, 2015 (Observed at sundown)

Feast of Unleavened Bread
April 4–10, 2015

Pentecost
May 24, 2015

Feast of Trumpets
September 14, 2015

Day of Atonement
September 23, 2015

Feast of Tabernacles
September 28–October 4, 2015

Last Great Day
October 5, 2015

Download the *Holy Day Calendar 2015–2017*
<http://cgi.org/holy-days/>



Q.—Really, why should I study the Bible?

A—There are many reasons. We have room for only a few here.

Self Improvement: Reading the Bible can be likened to peering into a mirror (James 1:23–25). The message recorded in God's Word has the power to allow us to see ourselves as we really are. It "pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12). In other words, it divides what we appear to be on the outside from what we really are on the inside. It shows us where changes are needed, just as a mirror does.

The Bible not only reveals where adjustments need to be made, but also helps us to *make* those adjustments. The apostle Paul wrote: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:15–17).

If we need to look regularly in a mirror to ensure that our appearance is acceptable, how much more so must we read God's Word, the Bible, on a regular basis!

Success in Life: Upon appointing Joshua to lead the nation of Israel, Jehovah God told him: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). Yes, to be successful, Joshua needed to read God's Word "day and night," on a regular basis.

The first psalm likewise extols the benefits of regular Bible reading when it states: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalms 1:1–3). Surely we want to be like such a man.

Practical Wisdom: Because the Bible is inspired of God, it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Yes, the Bible is a practical book. It reflects a keen understanding of human nature. No wonder, for its Author, the Eternal God, is the Creator! He understands our thinking and emotions better than we do. Furthermore, God knows what we need in order to be happy. He also knows what pathways we should avoid.

Some Bible principles deal with family life, work habits, and relationships with others. The Bible's principles apply to all people, and its counsel is always beneficial. The wisdom found in the Bible is summarized by God's words through the prophet Isaiah: "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isaiah 48:17).

Remaining in God's Love: Learning about God is a vital step in drawing closer to Him. It is a process that should never stop. If you were outside on a very cold night warming yourself by a fire, would you let the flames dwindle and then die out? No. You would keep adding fuel to keep the fire burning bright and hot. Your very life might be at stake! As wood fuels a fire, so "...out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6).

For more information, be sure to request our free booklet, *How to Study Your Bible*. Ω

Five Pieces of Paper — Both Sides

by Lloyd Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

Let's talk about the key to your salvation—and how to turn that key. We're speaking, of course, about your Bible.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" (2 Timothy 3:16). The word "inspiration" is *theopneustos* in the Greek, and means, literally, "God-breathed." In other words, it is God's very words to us. Without this Book, we would know virtually nothing about God, Jesus, or

God's plan for man. It is the most important book in the world! The very first verse in the Bible (Genesis 1:1) shows this is going to be the most unusual book ever written.

Read Any Good Books Lately?

Why should we should read and study the Bible? Because God says so. And because it is God's Word to us, personally. Remember, down through history, thousands of men, women, and children literally died to bring you the Book! During the Dark Ages, from the tenth to fifteenth centuries, if you were found in possession of a Bible, you would have been burned at the stake with your Bible chained around your neck. What a debt we owe to those who paid with their lives to give us the Word of God! Even today, it's a tremendous responsibility to own a Bible—one we all too often take for granted.

Sometimes we all either forget that or we do not fully embrace that. We will save letters from a loved one or spouse and read them time to time to recall the words and emotions of the letter. Maybe you have saved letters from a high school sweetheart (if you were born before MySpace, or the Facebook and Twitter era, that is). You reminisce opening the letter and pouring over the words as if they were written just yesterday. That should be our mindset when we open God's Word. We should see it as God's words to you and to me. It is not just an information book of do's and don'ts, but rather a book about the very mind of God.

Anciently, kings were also instructed to make a copy of the law in the fear of God. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that *he shall write him a copy of this law in a book* out of that which is before the priests the Levite's. And *it shall be with him*, and *he shall read therein all the days of his life*: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them" (Deuteronomy 17:18–19). We, too, are destined to be kings and priests in God's soon-coming Kingdom (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). What a shame it would be if we have to confess, "I never read the Bible from cover to cover!"

When all is said and done, your Bible is your most precious possession. Its pages open before you the option of either eternal life or eternal death. Think for a moment: If you couldn't get another Bible, what would you take for your "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:45–46)? Would you take a hundred dollars for it? A thousand? a million? It would be a poor exchange.

George Washington said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

There are seven symbols in the Bible to illustrate the Word of God. They are: a sword (Ephesians 6:17); a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29); a seed, (Luke 8:11); a mirror (James 1:23); a consuming fire (Jeremiah 20:9); a lamp (Psalm 119:105); and food (Matthew 4:4). In the Hebrew and Greek texts there are seven illustrations, seven being the number of perfection or completion.

We are told to "*Study* to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15; also see John 17:17). To study the Bible, you have to *read* it.

Seven times Christ asked the Pharisees, "Have ye not *read*?"

Have *we* read? "And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because *ye know not the scriptures*, neither the power of God" (Mark 12:24)?

People in America buy Bibles, but seldom read or believe them. How about you? It is estimated there are more Bibles in print today than there are people on the planet—over 7 billion. Unfortunately, they are not evenly distributed in all the world. Why are there so many Bibles? Many Bibles are used for appearance's sake. Preachers have at least one Bible, perhaps dozens. Bibles are used, or at least appear, at marriages, funerals, and church services. Some regard them as "good luck" charms. Sixty percent of atheists and agnostics own at least one Bible. Believe it or not, the Bible is also the most *shoplifted* book in the United States.

The *United Bible Society* reported that the Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into more than 2,530 languages! Talk about a best seller! In truth, the Bible has literally changed the world.

Many read and study publications supposedly *about* the Bible, and then use Bible snippets to show that what they are saying is *from* the Bible. Church publications and the Bible should go together.

Let's Get Personal

Let's get personal. Let's talk about *you*. Are *you* willing to blow the dust off your own Bible? Are you willing to read, study, and live by what it says?

**"Either this Book will keep me from my sins—
or my sins will keep me from this Book!"**

Before God, are you going to spend time in the Book—or not?

This Book is a CLEANSING agent. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Go's Word *sanctifies* us (John 17:17).

- "The fear of the Lord is *clean*, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalms 19:9).
- "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be *clean*: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalms 51:7,10).
- "Now ye are *clean* through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).
- "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean'" (Mark 1:40). He will also make *us* "clean" through His Word.
- "Thy Word is very *pure*: therefore thy servant loveth it" (Psalm 119:140).

A true old saying: "Either this Book will keep me from my *sins*—or my *sins* will keep me from this Book!" Think about that!

Millions of people don't like the Bible. Why? *Because it cramps their lifestyle*. If you're messing around with SIN, you're not going to enjoy this Book.

There is account of a parade of homosexuals in California who linked arms and chanted over and over, "We *will* not read the Bible! We *will* not read the Bible!" (I wonder why *not*?)

If you're *stepping out* on your mate, you don't enjoy Proverbs 4, 5, 6, and 7. If you're an *atheist* or *agnostic*, you don't care for Psalm 14:1 or Psalm 53:1—and for good reason! It calls you what you are—a fool!

They're not kidding me—I know what's in there! Consciously or unconsciously, they *hate* and *fear* the Book! And for good reason.

That Book knows all about you. We are to live "by every word of God," not by only the New Testament (Matthew 4:4). Every Christian ought to be a Bible reader. It is the one habit, more than any other, if done in the right spirit, that will make a Christian what he ought to be in every way.

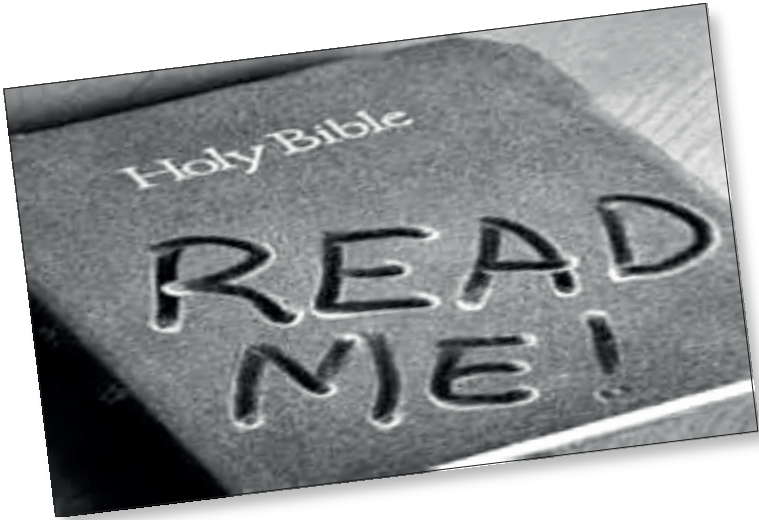
To read the whole Bible through, you need to set up a program—a goal. There are many, many "Bible reading programs" in existence. Most set up some kind of schedule to read the Bible through in a year or two. Some have you read so many chapters in the Old Testament and so many in the New. Perhaps 90 to 95 percent *never finish* the program. Once the reader falls behind a few days here and a few days there (and we all do), they give it up. We offer you here a *challenge*, a different way of looking at it that is both possible and encouraging.

Many get bogged down when they read all the Levitical duties or the furnishings of the tabernacle of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Others phase out at all the "begats." Actually, it should be encouraging to note the *precise records* God preserved for us. Christ said, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). Sometime in the not-too-distant future, all the "begats" may allow many to trace their ancestry all the way back to King David, Noah, or some other ancestor, and from there back to Adam and Eve! Once again, the inspired Word of God will prove to be the source of knowledge otherwise unattainable.

Some complain, "I just can't understand all the *thee's*, *thou's*, and *thine's* in the King James Bible. *Oh, yes you can!* Don't let the advertisers of modern day "Easy-Readism" translations fool you. In almost every language but modern English, people knew whether the speaker was addressing *one* person or *many*. In classical English, this is preserved. If the speaker is talking to one person, he uses "thee," "thou," or "thine." [As a memory aid, "T" has *one* downstroke]. If he is talking to a *plurality*

Paper, continued on next page

of persons, he says “you,” “your,” or “ye.” Your King James Version preserves this distinction, making the context clearer. Most modern translations do not.



Decision Time!

Can you make a DECISION—a RESOLUTION—a DETERMINATION? Right *now*? *Today* as you read this? Can you commit to read *ten pages of God’s Word a day* for the rest of your lives?

You say, “Wow, Lloyd, that’s a lot of pages!” Perhaps you think you don’t have time to read the Bible every day. We all have the same 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Do you have time for God’s Word? Or do all the attractions of this world crowd God out?

Look at it this way: That’s ONLY FIVE THIN PIECES OF PAPER a day on *BOTH* sides! Surely, you can read five pieces of paper a day! That’s only 15 to 20 minuets a day, max.

The average Bible is just a little over 1800 pages, some more, some less. You may have to adjust *your* reading schedule slightly to accommodate your personal Bible.

At ten pages a day, we can read the Bible through in 180 days. THAT’S TWO TIMES YEAR! Two times a year if you read five pieces of paper on *both* sides!

Are you telling me you can’t *do* it? Count ‘em: five pieces of paper in your Bible, 1-2-3-4-5. Is that a daunting task? You can *do* it! Start *now*!

One man pointed out that if you’ve been in the faith for 30 years and haven’t read through that Book 60 times, you are one sorry Christian! No wonder so many people “park their brains” at the door of their church! *They don’t know the Book!* If you’ve been in the faith 20 years, that’s going through the Bible 40 times. If you’ve been in the faith 10 years, that’s 20 times!

Still too many? OK, let’s break it down even further. How about two and one-half pieces of paper a day, *both sides*—that averages five pages a day. That’ll get you through the Bible *once a year*! Persistence and determination are the keys.

Place two ribbons or markers in your Bible—the first at your starting point and the second five pages later. You’ll be amazed at how easy it is once you make up your mind to *do* it. If you miss a day or two, so be it. You are not held to any artificial schedules. Some days you’ll even find yourself reading ahead.

I recommend you read your Bible with pen and ruler in hand so you can mark or underline the verses that jump out at you.

What’s Your Excuse?

What are your PRIORITIES? TV? The Internet? Video games? Trash books? Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, *and* His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Luke 6:46 says, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

So you see, you hold the *key* to your salvation in your own hand. Use it wisely.

Christians know they should read, study, and obey what is found in the Holy Bible. We recommend that you request our free booklet, *How to Study Your Bible*. This booklet is designed to help you comprehend and retain what you read in the Scriptures. You will learn how to study your Bible, how to avoid common mistakes, and how to mark your Bible. As an alternative reading plan, we also include a *A Daily Bible Reading Schedule* to read your Bible in 365 days, beginning at *any* day of the year!

One more thing: We would appreciate very much hearing from you to know whether or not you are *going* to read the Book. And when you *finish*, we would very sincerely appreciate hearing that you have accomplished what you set out to do. Just give us a call or drop us a line and tell us, “We *did* it! We read the Book!”

May God bless you richly as you READ HIS BOOK!

Ω

Notable Sayings About the Bible

Read these quotes and fall in love again with the Word of God.

George Washington: “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”

Abraham Lincoln: “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.”

Patrick Henry: “The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed.”

John Quincy Adams: “So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year.”

Andrew Jackson: “That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests.”

Daniel Webster: “If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

Queen Victoria: “That book accounts for the supremacy of England.”

Napoleon: “The Bible is no mere book, but a Living Creature, with a power that conquers all that oppose it.”

U. S. Grant: “The Bible is the sheet-anchor of our liberties.”

Horace Greeley: “It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

Robert E. Lee: “In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.”

Lord Tennyson: “Bible reading is an education in itself.”

Charles A. Dana: “The grand old Book still stands; and this old earth, the more its leaves are turned and pondered, the more it will sustain and illustrate the pages of the Sacred Word.”

Immanuel Kant: “The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity.”

Charles Dickens: “The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world.”

W. E. Gladstone: “I have known 95 of the world’s great men in my time, and of these 87 were followers of the Bible. The Bible is stamped with a Specialty of Origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from all competitors.”

Sir William Herschel: “All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures.”

Sir Isaac Newton: “There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.”

Thomas Huxley: “The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed. The human race is not in a position to dispense with it.”

John Ruskin: “Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart.”

W. H. Seward: “The whole hope of human progress is suspended on the ever growing influence of the Bible.”

Goethe: “Let mental culture go on advancing, let the natural sciences progress in ever greater extent and depth, and the human mind widen itself as much as it desires, beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity, as it shines forth in the gospels, it will not go.”

Source: Henry H. Haley, “Haley’s Bible Handbook” (Michigan: Zondervan, 1965) pp. 18–19 .

Ω

Is a Caliphate in the Making?

Part II

The question is becoming more relevant for our time—is a Caliphate developing? Is that what is happening? How far will these terrorist groups like al-Qaida, ISIS, Hamas, Hezbollah, Boko Haram, and the Muslim Brotherhood be allowed to continue their visceral violence and acts of terror? How committed are they in accomplishing this objective?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

Dr. Angleo Codevilla, Professor Emeritus of International Relations at Boston University, former Senate Intelligence Committee member, and author of a new book titled, *To Make and Keep Peace*, warns that the recent videos displaying ISIS beheadings of Western citizens “is an existential challenge from which we cannot afford to shrink.” He claims in order to defeat ISIS, it will “require first, isolating the Islamic State politically, and physically depriving all within it of the capacity to make war, and even eat.” Dr. Codevilla goes on to explain the United States and the Middle East are

reaping the results from both Republican and Democratic administrations intervening “fecklessly” within the region. In other words, both sides of the aisle are to blame for the empowerment and enabling of this growing unrest and threat, largely due to the non-committal approach of sustaining a long-term, objective-driven foreign policy on how to deal with these unconscionable, inhumane Muslim jihadists.



It’s unfortunate, but many don’t see this movement for what it is—a Muslim “religious movement” that promotes *death*. It is plain to recognize that these Muslims—and they *are* self-proclaimed admitted Muslims, not stamp collectors, Sumatra natives, or Ukrainian cooks—believe that while engaged in jihad, if they should die a martyr’s death, they immediately go to a sensual *paradise*. This advances the idea that to die while championing the progression of Islam is most honorable, and rewarded with guaranteed entrance into an erotic paradise, according to parts of the Qur’an and Hadith sources (ref. 72 Virgins, Wikiislam.net). Unfortunately, that’s perceived as motivational.

Agreeing with the passionate belief and frenzied emotions of this myth, we see many young men and women flocking to the Middle East to enlist—even including citizens from Australia, Europe, Canada, and the United States—all excitedly caught up in the idea of a Utopian society governed by a Caliph. This Caliph is a type of “Islamic Pope” who is destined to rule the Caliphate these Islamic jihadists are convinced will spread like wildfire around the world, providing happiness, unity, and peace to all who accept the opportunity to live and die for Allah—especially to *die* for Allah.

Not unlike a century ago, back about 1915, a very legitimate Caliphate slaughtered a million Armenians and another 250,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians and Assyrians in what was considered *jihad*. It came at the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (a modern-day Caliphate) with the same degree of brutality, beheadings, eviscerations, and human humiliations. Along with it came the establishment of harems and sexual slavery, rapes, and forced marriages that all served to disparage and dishonor women, ravaging and ruthlessly despoiling their freedoms and

female dignity. This event was the result of previous decades of Islamic Turkey’s premeditated plunder of genocidal proportions, executed upon the Armenian Christians, massacring about 300,000 during the mid-1890s under the Caliph, Sultan Abdul Hamid 2.

This merciless ethnic cleansing was an illustration of unspeakable mass atrocities against innocent people while the demented chanting of *Allahu Akhbar*, “Allah is great,” was proclaimed. This same chant was done by the Fort Hood terrorist—an Islamic jihadist—killing three and wounding many more in cold blood just a few years ago; and as was done most recently in Paris when Muslim jihadists attacked the French publication, *Charlie Hebdo*, and the kosher grocery store; as well as a cafe in Australia and the Capitol building in Ottawa, Canada.

The history is clear: This kind of Islam—and it *is* Islam, regardless of President Obama’s claim that ISIS *isn’t* Muslim (ref: Presidential speech, September 10, 2014), which believes in jihad, using the sword to conquer—*this* kind of Islam is on a mission to force the world to submit to *its* interpretation of what they believe God expects in the way of obedience. And make no mistake—it does *not* corroborate with the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Remember, Mohammad was a *self-proclaimed* warrior prophet, whose legacy includes the cold-blooded slaughter of thousands of people, including many Jews, plainly proving that his god is not the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets of the Old and New Testaments.

Instead, and unfortunately, jihad *does* agree with their interpretation of the Qu’ran—and therein lies what many are not accepting—that we are unquestionably involved in a *religious* war with Muslim people who actually think the Qu’ran supports this kind of activity. Clearly, that is the Islamic jihadist’s view—and from the President of the United States, to and including all Western leaders and heads of state, every one of them needs to finally come to accept this *reality*. We have no choice, for these Muslims have declared war on the West and the Jewish state of Israel! The sooner we recognize this, the better prepared the West will be to contend and defend against it!

Western Leaders Have Underestimated the Islamic Commitment

For whatever reason, and it clearly doesn’t make sense (as a matter of fact, if I didn’t know any better, I’d say it’s almost supernatural)—the Western leaders of the so-called free world, the United States, Britain and Europe, are acting knuckle-headed, obtuse, and reprobate. History has proven this kind of Islam has produced some very deadly fruit, and the threat it presents should be taken very *seriously*. Yet surprisingly, it seems tolerance, compromise, and accommodation are remarkably the “order of things” when dealing with this type of fanatical religious lunacy. It really is incredibly disturbing to see such mis-handling by the upper levels of political and military strategists—people you would think should know better!

Clearly, the Islamic Caliphate that settled in Turkey at the end of the Ottoman Empire (of the late 19th, early 20th century) should be viewed as the modern day model of what an Islamic Caliphate state would be like under Sharia law. Remember, it was only about a hundred years ago that this



Dividing the World

occurred. The point is—and make no mistake—the genocidal tactics deployed upon the Turkish Armenians, Slavs, and Greek Christians by those particular Muslims was, in fact, *jihad* !

Admittedly, not *all* Muslims participated in this massacre of genocidal proportions—but interestingly, it is a historical *fact*—the perpetrators of this tragic attempt to erase whole ethnicities was conducted *exclusively* by people who considered themselves Muslims and thought themselves to be the *muha-jirun*, or “holy warrior” jihadists. It was this group and they alone who benefited from the “booty” captured from these traditional “Christian people”—taking their land, homes, and property—while awarding themselves women and child slaves for all kinds of unspeakable purposes. If evil could be pictured, this 100-year-old historical event would certainly be part of the portrait, along with other holocaust events that are part of the despicable legacy of demonic forces that have driven mad men, nations, and cultural and/or religious movements of unsuspecting human beings to execute upon their fellow man atrocities of such barbaric and appalling circumstances that words fail to describe the horror, shock, and dismay of these conditions! It is plainly, outrageously repugnant and shameful what mankind has inflicted upon his fellow human beings—it’s *simply evil*!

Yet, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), this militant Sunni Wahhabis’ type jihadist Muslim confederation, now wants to be considered ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), which is the larger region of the eastern Mediterranean area, simply because it has its objective set on a larger goal—to become the “IS” (Islamic State)—a Caliphate! Recently, “IS” destroyed the Armenian Genocide Memorial Church. There is a *significant reason* for this. (Please read this informative link to help you understand: ref. <http://atheism.about.com#684EA5>).

Consider what Islamic scholar Andrew Bostom said when he mentioned the following information on a recent news program from a major network. “Notwithstanding the recent horrific spate of atrocities committed against the Christian communities of northern Iraq by Islamic State (IS) jihadists, the Ottoman jihad ravages were equally barbaric, depraved, and far more extensive. Occurring primarily between 1915 and 1916 (although continuing through 1918), some one million Armenian, and 250,000 Assyro-Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox Christians were brutally slaughtered or starved to death during forced deportations through desert wastelands. The identical gruesome means *currently* used by IS/IL to humiliate and massacre its hapless Christian victims were employed on a scale that was in order of magnitude, *greater* by the Ottoman Muslim Turks...”

Do we understand what this gentleman is saying? This is a *serious* statement made by a Muslim *scholar*. He is claiming these monstrous methods used a hundred years ago, and now employed by this present group—Islamic State (IS)—is in fact a *statement*! They are modeling themselves after the Turkish Caliphate of a *century* ago. The destruction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Church proclaims their disrespect for those who died (as far as I.S. is concerned, they were infidels) and their approval of what those Islamic jihadists did to all those traditional Christian people a hundred years ago. That is a major statement, which unfortunately has fallen on the dulled minds and deaf ears of Western leaders who are too dense to admit the danger—or worse, refuse to “connect the dots” to these perilous and threatening circumstances. Instead, they choose to find comfort in their obvious denial! And the denial is obvious! The President of the United States won’t even call it *Muslim* extremism, or *Islamic* jihadists—instead, it’s “violent extremism” or “work place violence”—and no different than what so-called Christians did during the Crusades of the Dark Ages. Seriously? This is incredible!

The facts are proving to be quite clear: I.S. continues to forge ahead, conducting multiple beheadings and burning alive those it conquers, while expanding the geography it controls. Presently, I.S. has successfully secured within the countries of Iraq and Syria an area about the size of *Britain*, or *five times the size of Lebanon*, and is now encroaching on Egypt and Libya. It has about 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers in arms, and is generating about a million dollars a day from oil sales. The Muslim Brotherhood continues to make

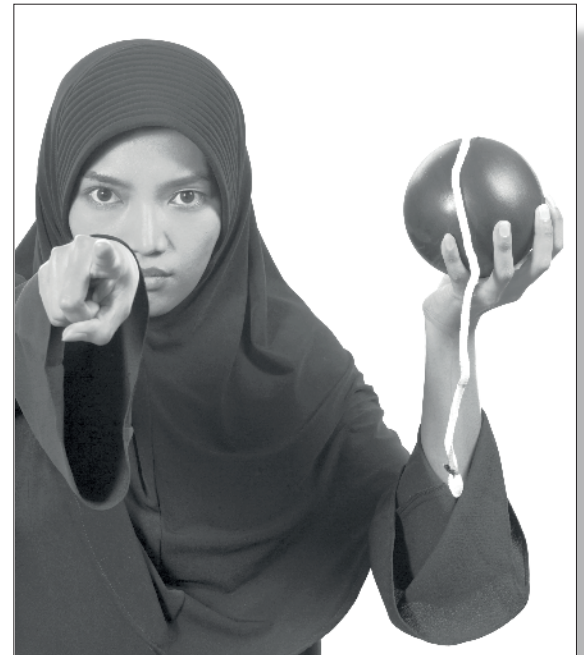


911 Attack

inroads into Egypt with more influence, and continues to expand its range of control within the government. And Iran remains defiant and relentless in its pursuit of a nuclear bomb, and appears to be closing in on accomplishing that goal, while the United States looks on, lacking a substantive strategy to stop them from doing this.

Why Is This Happening?

Many today don’t accept the biblical connection of the United States and the British Commonwealth nations being the result of migrations from the ancient cultures of the “Lost Ten Tribes” of Israel, and consequent recipients of God’s Abrahamic birthright blessings of physical wealth and affluence. But regardless of that controversy, history records these cultures have been established on Judeo/Christian principles that were instrumental in using much of their wealth for advancing the name of Jesus Christ. After all, it is an unequivocal historical fact, the United Kingdom and United States considered themselves Christian—they adopted and embraced the Christian religion as their social underpinning religious foundation.



Terrorist Woman with Bomb

With that said, the social and hegemony parallels these cultures have with ancient Israel are stunning; and if these cultures are indeed connected, the current “drift” presents, from the pages of your Bible, a very *foreboding future* of horrific events for the people of North America, Britain, New Zealand, and Australia.

Similar to what underscored the ruin and final collapse of that original nation of Israel, today in our time, England, the United States, Canada, and Australia are all falling prey to the same compromising forces—granting concessions for accommodating different cultures and religions that have no intent, or interest to assimilate, or attach to the social fabric of what Western cultures were built on—which happens to be the Old and New Testaments, including the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is historical fact! (Write for our free reprint article, *North America: Listen!*)

The result of this new and progressive method of absorbing modern-day Middle-Eastern immigrants is generating segregated communities that cater to the Middle-Eastern culture they represent. This has become quite clear throughout Europe—France, Germany, and England—all are good examples of this nationalistic segregation that is proliferating within these cultures.

Though the United States has not been affected to the same extent, the trend is recognizable. The same results are occurring, whether in Detroit; Minneapolis; Irving, Texas; Kentucky; or New York; the current style, the drift, the course we are on, is leading to the same conditions—small segregated Middle-Eastern communities that are self-governed to lesser or greater degrees, providing nourishment to grow and ferment with greater resulting conflict. Assimilation is not in the minds of these immigrants—or should we say, foreign nationals?

But the lack of assimilation, though problematic, is not the real issue, or reason for concern. What is at the heart of this note-worthy development is the embracing of *Secular Humanism* within Western culture—this is the current trend in “religion!” Obviously, this leads to the use of *moral relativism* as the gauge or reference of determining the definition of what is morally right and wrong!

Whether in North America, the United Kingdom, or Europe, the societal track we are on is leading us to marginalize God in our lives, which will result in eliminating God from our culture. This is a dangerous course to follow, since we have been so blessed with such God-given wealth and prosperity! The people of North America and the United Kingdom need to *wake up!*

Interestingly, God had this concern with ancient Israel. Throughout Deuteronomy, specifically chapters four through 11, God addresses this concern very pointedly. Notice: “Take heed unto yourselves, *lest you forget the covenant* of the LORD your God, which he made with you... When you shall beget children... and you shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves... and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD your God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to

Caliphate, continued from page 14

Why Some Prayers Go Unanswered

Why should we pray? What must we do to be heard by God? Are there certain things we should not do? And, most of all, why do some of our prayers seem to go unanswered?

by Lloyd Cary

Some say there are two kind of prayers: the answered and the unanswered. Have you ever prayed a prayer that was not answered? Of course you have! We all have. Whose fault was that? Was it God's fault, or ours? In view of the many promises in God's Word, the Bible, we know it is not God's fault, so it must be ours. In what way? What are we doing wrong? And most of all, how can we correct it?

First, why should we pray at all? Is it only because we have the "gimmies," wanting something from God? Or are there other, deeper reasons? Did you know it is a *sin* for Christians *not* to pray? You'll find that in 1 Samuel 12:23 (KJV throughout, emphasis the author's) "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should *sin* against the LORD in ceasing to *pray* for you..."

One important reason we should pray to God is that He tells us to do so. His Word assures us, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

What Is Prayer?

While we often think of prayer primarily as asking God *for* something, prayer, properly understood, is a *conversation* with God. God speaks to you through His Word; we speak to God in prayer. Just as we cannot hold a conversation with another person unless he can hear us, the very act of praying is an understood recognition of the presence of God here with us. And in praying, we strengthen that recognition of the presence of God. Prayer in itself draws us closer to Him. Prayer is the action that releases our faith. We, too, can pray like Jesus.

The apostle Paul tells us that we should "pray without ceasing," yet in this rapidly moving, state-of-the-art world, it sometimes seems that prayer takes a back seat not only to our work but to our entertainment. A recent study reveals that the average person spends over three hours a day communicating with his hand-held electronic device! As a result, many of us have fallen out of the *habit* of daily prayer that characterized the lives of Christians in centuries past. An active prayer life is essential to our Christian growth. Think about it! When we pray we are talking to the very Creator of the universe!—and we don't even need a hand-held device!

Nonetheless, prayer has recently become very popular in some circles. There are now prayer hours, prayer days, prayer weeks, prayer months, and prayer years. Many tapes, DVDs, telecasts, books, and articles, have addressed the power of prayer. Some spend more time learning *about* prayer than actually praying. There have been widely acclaimed so-called "Holy Years," when a whole year was set aside for "special devotions and prayers, especially for world peace." *The World Day of Prayer*, when people in over 170 nations unite in prayer for peace, has received wide acclaim. *The Women's World Day of Prayer* started in the USA as early as 1887. Prayers for the world and its rulers are spoken at inaugurations, coronations, sessions of lawmaking bodies, and political conventions. Jesus said we should even "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Luke 6:28). Clergymen, politicians, presidents, and popes urge others to pray for the United Nations and the world. Some have even proposed that people should take their telephone books and begin praying for strangers from A-to-Z to get them into the habit of praying for all men. It may be shocking to many that, in some cases, God says *not* to pray for certain individuals! (For examples, see Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; Psalm 66:18; Hosea 5:6 in your own Bible.) Most of these people were caught up in some form of idolatry. Their hearts were far from God. God will deal with these in a future resurrection.

Yes, much praying goes on for the world, and yet we see that most such prayers appear to go unanswered. Even so, the grim fact is clear: the world is in worse shape than ever before. The prayers of the masses of people are *not* being answered at this time! There are still wars, rumors of wars, and all the other accompanying warnings of Mathew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Thus prayers for the world seem to go unanswered, and even seem to backfire. What are we to think of such a confusing situation? One of the first things thinking people realize is, that instead of there being something wrong with *GOD*, there must be something wrong with the *PRAYERS*.

Indeed, one glaring defect is evident—that is the *inconsistency* of prayers. Yes, prayers uttered by preachers of a religious faith often *conflict* with prayers uttered by *other* preachers of that same faith. During World Wars I and II, Protestant and Catholic clergymen, in both Germany and America, prayed for victory for their respective sides. Clergymen of the same faith presumably were praying to the same God, yet their prayers were not of the same mind! They were *oppositionally inconsistent*. In effect, the clergymen prayed for the destruction of their spiritual brothers. Yet Christ's apostle declared: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak

the same thing, and that there be *no* divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the *same* mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). What were the people on the defeated side—those who had hoped in their clergy's prayers—to think when the wars ended? Would not their faith in both prayer and God be shattered? Would they not doubt God Himself for not answering their prayers? At the very least would they not think that God was partial? Yet the apostle Peter said: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons'" (Acts 10:34). So then, there must be something wrong, not with God, but with the *prayers*.

To understand just what is wrong and why prayers go unanswered, we must turn to God's Word, the Bible. There we find three primary reasons for unanswered prayer: (1) Failure to pray to the right One, (2) Failure to pray in the right manner, and (3) Failure to pray in God's will.

God—The Right One

Many people around the world pray to A DIFFERENT GOD. There are twelve classical world religions—those religions most often included in history of world religion surveys and studied in world religions classes: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. Plus, there are literally thousands of splits, schisms, and divisions amongst these twelve major divisions. *What confusion!* Don't be deceived (Matthew 24:4,11,24). "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). If prayer is to be answered, it must be directed to the right One. That right One is the Creator, the God of heaven and earth. "I am the LORD: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8). I am the LORD, and there is none else, *there is no God beside Me*: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." (Isaiah 45:5).

The Bible also speaks of ANOTHER GOD, a counterfeit god defined as *the god of this world* (2 Corinthians 4:4); *the prince of the power of the air* (Ephesians 2:20); *the great dragon, that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world* (Revelation 12:9).

God is not obligated to answer the prayers directed to idols, false gods, or false hypotheses of God. He detests them. Our prayer must be directed to the God of the Bible, not the concepts, traditions, or assumptions of men. Prayer to a false god is like dialing a wrong number—He is not there—*nobody answers!* (Send for our free booklet, *Who, What is God?*)

Many professed Christians direct their prayers to or through some *image*—even if it exists only in their own minds. Millions pray to one "saint" or another, or to Mary, the mother of Jesus. There is *no* Bible support for such a practice. None. IT IS PRAYING TO THE WRONG ONE. When the Son of God gave instructions on praying, only prayer addressed to God THE FATHER was approved: "After this manner therefore pray ye: *Our Father* which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). Clearly, then, praying to or through statues or images is no part of *biblical* Christianity. Says the Bible: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not" (Psalms 115:4-6). "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save" (Isaiah 45:20). "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god" (Isaiah 44:17).

So we see that prayer directed to any other than the true Creator God of heaven is futile: "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4). "What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make *dumb idols?*" (Habakkuk 2:18).

Praying in the Right Manner

Not only must prayer be made to the right One—the eternal God of heaven and earth—but the one *praying* the prayer must *be* right, that is, he must be *RIGHTEOUS*, living in harmony with God's written Word. The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry" (Psalms 34:15). "For all the gods of the nations are *idols*: but the LORD made the heavens" (Psalms 96:5). The rulers of this world, together with the clergy who have blessed their wars, have stained their hands with blood. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I WILL HIDE MINE EYES FROM YOU: yea, when ye make many prayers, I WILL NOT HEAR: your hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:15).

Prayers, continued on page 13

Prayers, continued from previous page

1 Peter 2:17 tells us to, “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” That is, show them the respect due to them because we are all God’s children. We are to have respect those who have the rule over us. Our prayers for them is that they repent, turn to God, and ultimately be in His Kingdom. We should not pray that evil men succeed or are blessed for disobedience to God not to perpetuate this evil world’s system of things (Galatians 1:4).

Can one confidently expect an answer to his prayer if he prays presumptuously or does not ask it in Jesus’ name? Praying in the right manner means to approach God *fearfully* and *humbly* and in the name of Christ Jesus. “For there is *one God*, and *one mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Said the Son of God Himself: “Jesus saith unto him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me’” (John 14:6). Since Christ is the “one mediator,” the *only* mediator, there can be no more mediators between God and men. Hence, praying to God in the name of some “saint” or the mother of Jesus is unscriptural. IT IS PRAYING IN THE WRONG MANNER. The right manner is explained by Jesus: “If ye shall ask any thing in *My name*, I will do it” (John 14:14).

Praying in the right manner also means to pray *with faith*. There are the so-called “enlightened” clergymen of today who do not really believe God’s Word to be inspired (2 Corinthians 11:15; 2 John 1:10). Prayer, these pseudo-preachers imply, is merely a psychological tonic; it enables one to maintain an inner calm and confidence. Such persons are totally devoid of faith. Their prayers receive no answer from God. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is [that He exists], and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). And many are the churchgoers who call themselves “Christian” but who deep down in their hearts lack faith in God and His Word, the Bible. Of such persons the Scripture says: “For let *not* that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” (James 1:7). So faith is truly vital. Jesus said, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).

A prayer made in the right manner is one that stems from *humility* and *sincerity*. “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:17). Listen carefully: *Are* the memorized, ritualized, mumbo-jumbo, high-sounding prayers we frequently hear really out of “humility and sincerity”? Often those who pray before a large audience talk *to the people* in the assembly room rather than to God. Prayers at large political conventions are usually a speech to please men rather than a prayer in Jesus’s name. Often the minister who delivers the grand, eloquent prayer in a church setting is talking to gain the praise of *men*! The words do not come from the heart; they come from memory or a manuscript. This praying for praise was also popular in Jesus’ day. His condemnation of this practice was sharp: “And when thou prayest, thou shalt *not* be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward” (Matthew 6:5).

Many prayers are aimed not only for praise, but at the purse as well! Using prayer as a means to fleece the flock was not uncommon in Jesus’ day either: “Which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation” (Mark 12:40). So we see from God’s Word, all who pray with an ulterior motive are praying not out of sincerity, but in an improper manner. God is not obligated to answer such prayers.

Does the right manner of prayer allow for prayer “helps” or “aids” such as prayer books and prayer beads? Prayer with the use of prayer books and rosaries is mechanical, routine, and repetitious. This tends to take away from sincerity. Not only that, but nowhere in the Bible do we read of God’s servants using prayer aids. Certainly they never used beads or amulets! On the contrary, history shows it was pagan religions that used prayer beads or rosaries. To this day, the Tibetans employ prayer wheels and beads. They think that because of their huge *volume* of prayers, they will “wear God down” and be heard. So it is with many professing Christians today; they use the rosary and even devices for counting the prayers, instead of learning how to pray in the right heart-to-heart manner as Jesus commanded in Matthew 6:7, 8.

“But when ye pray, use *not* vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him” (Matthew 6:7–8).

Some compromise, “But God understands I can’t obey Him due to my circumstances.” Yes, does God understand. He understands your *refusal* to obey His Word. None can hide behind ignorance (Romans 1:20).

The Will of God

Though one prays to the right One and even in the right manner, his prayer may still not be answered! Why? Because one must also pray on the right matters—the will of God. To be answered, prayer must be in harmony with the Divine *will*. All prayer not in harmony with God’s purposes, as revealed in His Word the Bible, will go unanswered. Take, for example, a subject people often pray for—world peace. In the 1950 “Holy Year,” some

3,000,000 pilgrims at Rome prayed for peace. Millions of others prayed along with the pope. But instead, the “Holy Year” brought the Korean War and some ten other uprisings. Since these prayers failed miserably, even when uttered by such dignitaries as the president, the pope and the prime minister, there must be something wrong with praying for the world. Such prayers are clearly out of harmony with God’s purpose. That is why Jesus in a very “politically incorrect” manner said to His heavenly Father: “I pray for them: I pray *not* for the world, but for them which thou hast given Me; for they are Thine” (John 17:9).

The reason that Jesus did not pray for this world—for the continuance of this system of things as they are—is that it is controlled by “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and is doomed to destruction. Chapter after chapter in the Bible foretells a day of God’s vengeance, when He executes judgment against this wicked world. The book of Isaiah warns of the near destruction of this world. “The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; *because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant*. Therefore hath the *curse* devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left” (Isaiah 24:3–6).

How futile, then, to pray for this present world when God, the Almighty God, has decreed its utter destruction! God is not going to “patch up” this world. It is sinful and decayed to the core. It is hypocritical. It does not obey even the simplest of God’s commands, such as the fourth commandment. We can only pray that men see the error of their ways and *repent* and turn to God with their hearts. God’s way to world peace is not through any league of kingdoms or United Nations, but through a *new* world: “For, behold, I create *new* heavens and a *new* earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1).

Instead of weeping over the present anguish of nations and praying for its abatement, true Christians see that these turbulent times, indeed such calamities as famines, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wars, ARE FULFILLMENT OF BIBLE PROPHECY pertaining to the sign of the *last days*; hence they rejoice, as Jesus said they should (Luke 21:28). We rejoice because we know deliverance to a new world is at hand, that this present evil world must end in that “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again,” namely, the battle of that great day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:14). This is God’s decree. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21).

When God decreed the fall of Jerusalem because of the Israelites’ unfaithfulness, he told Jeremiah not to pray for the people: “Pray *not* thou for this people, *neither* lift up cry nor prayer for them, *neither* make intercession to me; *for I will not hear thee*.” So likewise praying for this destruction-bound world by man’s hand is futile. It would be contrary to this explicit command of Christ’s beloved apostle: “Love not the world, neither the things that are *in* the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

Still, most continue to pray for things in the world, then they wonder why their prayers are not answered. Prayers for politicians, governments, victory at sports, armies and navies, the United Nations, and one world government are prayers for “things in the world.” There are those who pray for great wealth, prosperity, and power. These persons ask amiss. We must pray *in the WILL of God*. The Bible example is: “Thy kingdom come. Thy WILL be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Their motives are often wrong: “Ye ask, and receive *not*, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men... Who will have *all men to be saved*, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1,4). “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, *WILL of God*” (Romans 12:2).

“For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). Those who want their prayers answered must be diligent to learn proper prayer, not merely unbridled emotionalism. How? Study, read, and heed God’s Word. Show love for God by obeying His laws and commands (John 14:15). Pray petitions that are in harmony with His purpose of a peaceful new world. Pray on matters authorized by God Himself. Some of the matters that God’s Word authorizes are for food, forgiveness, against temptation, to know God’s will, for knowledge, for family, and for the destruction of the wicked.

In summary, pray to the right One, pray in the right manner, and pray in God’s will; and you will find that God does indeed answer prayers. “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

For a deeper understanding of this vital topic be sure to request our free booklet, *How to Be More Effective In Your Prayer Life*. Ω

Caliphate, continued from page 11

witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land... And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and you shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you” (Deuteronomy 4:23–27).

Notice this also: “And these words... shall be in your heart: ...you shall teach them diligently unto your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign... write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates. ...when the LORD your God shall have brought you into the land which he swore unto your fathers Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, ...goodly cities, which you built not, and houses full, ...which you filled not, ... wells digged, which you digged not, vineyards and olive trees, which you planted not; when you shall have eaten and be full; ...beware lest you forget the LORD which brought you forth...” (Deuteronomy 6:6–12).

This potential of not being grateful to God for the blessings of the land that has brought forth so much prosperity is so very similar to the nations of the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, that it is sobering and saddening that the people of our modern-day cultures no longer recognize the God of our fathers—the one Christ introduced as the Father—and do not give the respect, honor, and prestige He deserves.

Notice what Moses continues to say in Deuteronomy: “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, ...his testimonies, ...his statutes, ...do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with you, ...And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, what mean the testimonies, ...the statutes, ...the judgments, which the LORD our God has commanded you? Then ...say unto your son, ...the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, ...upon all his household, ...he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land, which he swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day” (Deuteronomy 6:17–25).

Clearly, we are not doing what was told to the ancient Israelites. Like them, we are a rebellious house—a culture of people who refuses to allow God to guide our ways and have the influence in our lifestyles and social profile. What was once considered right is now wrong and vice versa. Our social surroundings are being turned upside down and inside out. No longer is anything sacred, not the lives of the unborn, our marriages, or our own God-given genders. Everything and anything is up for debate and possible change or modification. We are living in a *brave new world* that is on the fast track to becoming reprobate beyond recovery. It’s no secret as to why our leaders seem to lack wisdom and common sense in managing the threats and perils jeopardizing our freedoms, liberties, and safety. They have simply abandoned God, and it appears He is now removing His hedge of protection and giving us up to minds that are “void of judgment”—reprobate!

Where Do We Go From Here?

There seems to be a sense of something increasingly menacing—something ominous and sinister developing on the horizon—something that has



Terrorist

the potential of changing the geopolitical playing field. Bible prophecy has a lot to say regarding the looming storm that is approaching the world we live in. The evidence is plain to see by the circumstances manifesting these unsettling conditions, now appearing to exponentially extend beyond the boundaries of the geographical theaters we are used to seeing—the acts of violent terrorism are getting closer to North America and Europe! And don’t kid yourself—our shores, Canada, Australia, and Britain are undeniably targets also for these jihadist Muslim groups that



911

have declared war on the United States and the Jewish Israeli state of Israel—the West in general!

We need to understand they are both relentless and patient—they are very *long term in their tactics*. And what most in the West don’t understand, they are determined with “doubled down resolve” to create a Caliphate—an Islamic State (I.S.) that will rival the West for world positioning and political influence. (Please read this informative link for additional context—ref. <http://www.islamdaily.or/#684E7D>).

Prophetically, we also know the ultimate debasing of the birth-right nations and developed establishment of a King of the South will be accomplished due to God’s prophetic plan. He is steering world conditions and circumstances to conclude this phase of mankind’s rule. Jesus Christ is on a count-down from heaven and is presently working through His church to cry aloud—“for the night is far spent, the day is at hand”—we need to recognize “it is high time to awake out of sleep.” We have a responsibility to express the sense of urgency toward warning our fellow Christians, neighbors, and citizens we share our country with. The time is at hand more than ever before to show the people of the so-called “Christian West” their sins, and why God is angry with the social cultures that have adopted His ways to define their underpinning belief of the Living God and His Savior, Jesus Christ!

The message we have is really the only practical message there is, when considering what the prophecies hold for our, and the world’s, future—because a major sized “Euroclydon storm” is preparing to explode onto the world scene. The clouds are gathering—there are conditions and circumstances *in the making* to forge the path for both the King of the North and King of the South to emerge onto the geopolitical platform. They will marginalize and displace the influence of the United States and United Kingdom. A world without our “balance of power” is coming!

It’s important *now* that we do our best to spread the “Good News” (the Gospel) of the need for our families and neighbors to get right with God. They need, as do some of us, to repent and get baptized before this storm really begins to move in and affect our homeland!

“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. We then, as *workers together with him*, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the [a] day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the [an] accepted time; behold, now is the [a] day of salvation.)” (2 Corinthians 5:20 through 6:2).

This is an accepted time for salvation to be provided. It is also a time upon all of us, personally, to do the best we can to utilize what resources we have (public social mediums) to advance this message of salvation—because the “house” is certainly burning, and there are people to warn and enlighten, to baptize and nurture, about the way to secure their future into the Family of God through Christ and His sacrifice. We can only pray, while in the midst of what appears to be a daunting task, that God will continue to provide us the means, courage, and boldness to share this information with power and compelling force from His Spirit, for the sake of those He is calling. Ω

Goodbyes

by Dianne Prather-Tuskes



Dianne Prather-Tuskes and Marge Watson

When my mother died a long time ago, I could not stand up and speak at her funeral. I guess the strength I had caring for her during her terrible illness sapped every bit of energy I had, and just being there that day was all I could do. I remember how hard it was for my mother to say the things she needed to say towards the end, knowing that her days were numbered. She didn't quite know what lay ahead.

Since that time, I have grown to understand many things. I feel blessed to have the comfort of knowing what our Heavenly Father has in store for us when our mortal time on this earth is over. I would have liked to have known then what I know now, so I could have consoled my mother more, but the chapters in my walk with God are still being written in their own good time.

About a year and a half ago, a friend of mine asked me if I would help care for her dying mother. I accepted, even though I knew the experience would be raw and the emotions would cut deep when the memories of caring for my mother came flooding back. This lovely lady became my friend, and I quickly began to understand that God had prepared me for this challenge many years before. Her condition was similar to my mother's. I saw the signs with each passing day, and I was prepared for what was to come. I was stronger now, and when the day came, I felt it was my time to stand up and speak when others could not.

I wrote this poem after my friend had passed away. At her funeral I read it out to all her loved ones. It was what I felt she would have wanted to say to them if she could. It is what I felt my mother would have wanted to say to us if she could.

At the end, when words are so hard to come by, the overwhelming flood of our feeble and frail emotions can sometimes mask what our hearts really want to say. When, at times, those we have loved seemed to be snatched away without notice, no longer here, and no goodbyes able to be made—I dedicate this poem to all those who have come before us and who now rest their turn in peaceful slumber, awaiting our Lord's triumphant return when He will herald in the coming of His glorious and everlasting Kingdom. Ω

My Child

Cry for me my loving child,
But do so only for a while.
For God has freed me from this pain
Where only tears and anguish lain.

I know your love is true and strong,
But the years on earth I had were long.
I've run the race for you to see
That release is sweet and peace is free.

Your love so filled my every breath,
A joy to live a life so blessed.
Long not your sorrow and your pain,
For I know I'll see you yet again.

This gift of life for you I give,
To love and share, to smile and live.
Don't waste a moment, keep them dear.
Cherish all from year to year.

The times we've shared, the lessons learned,
The blessings shown at every turn,
The memories my life I've lived,
Are all I have left for you to give.

When rest befalls us and we're missed,
Remember each your cheeks I've kissed.
So cry for me a little while,
But don't forget to live and smile.

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What in the World is God Doing?

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Isn't it strange that man's fascination with the spiritual realm seems to deliberately overlook the rich typology seen in God's annual Sabbaths given to ancient Israel? Ironically, the mind of God is revealed in them. Now you can know!

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Passover Service, 2015

This year the **Christian Passover**, commonly referred to as the Lord’s Supper, should be observed on Thursday evening, April 2, which corresponds to the fourteenth of Abib (Nisan), the first month of the Sacred Calendar. You should begin just after sunset.

Jesus observed His last Passover service in the evening hours of this same day, just after sunset and through the hours before midnight on the 14th of Nisan.

All Christians, baptized members of the church, take part in this entire service. Non-baptized adherents, however, are welcome to be present and to take part in the foot-washing portion of the ceremony.

When there is a reasonable number of participants in a locality, the church leadership will arrange for use of a suitable meeting hall. This is the best way, by far, as the Christian Passover is by definition a fellowship assembly. If a service has been arranged in your area, you are strongly urged to make every effort to attend.

When it is impossible to attend with other brethren, the service may be held at home, preferably with at least one other participant of the same sex—this because of the foot-washing ceremony. Husband and wife, of course, may freely wash one another’s feet.

The Christian Passover is a most solemn celebration, and all that’s done should reflect this. For example, part of the preparation might be to have young children either in bed or supervised. And, of course, ahead of time, you’ll need to set out a sufficient number of glasses containing a little dry red wine, and a small plate of unleavened bread. A basin with some warm water and a towel, for each person, also need to be on hand.

We have included a video of a recent Christian Passover service online at <http://cgi.org/passover/>. You may elect to use this video by starting and stopping it during the appropriate segments of the

service. If you will play it through ahead of time and make the preparations indicated on this page, we believe you will be able to partake of the Passover service in a manner well pleasing to God.

If you prefer not to use the video, we recommend that you observe the following guidelines:

A period of quiet reading of appropriate scriptural passages may also be useful to refresh your memory and to really appreciate the fullest meaning of this night. This could perhaps include, but not be limited to, Matthew chapters 26 through 28, Luke chapters 22 and 23, and also Psalm 51.

Open the service with prayer, and perhaps a reading of Psalm 22, followed by John 13:1–17. Next comes the foot washing, which conveys an attitude of humility and service. After the foot washing, read Isaiah 52:13—53:12, followed by 1 Corinthians 11:23–34. Prior to breaking the bread, which symbolizes Christ’s broken body, read Matthew 26:26. Then take a portion of the bread (*RyKrisp* or *Matzos* will do) and a small glass of wine (preferably a dry, natural red wine). Ask God’s blessing over the bread and eat it; you will already have read the many scriptures on the subject and know the fullest meaning of discerning the Lord’s body. Then read Matthew 26:27 and ask God’s blessing over the wine, which is symbolic of Christ’s shed blood, and drink it.

After introducing the disciples to this new institution in memory of His death, Jesus spoke to them at length on various matters. It’s our practice to read, at this point, from the Gospels some portions of what He then taught the disciples (John 13:31 through chapter 17). You could select portions of this in advance. Finally, they sang a hymn (Matthew 26:28–30).

If you have any questions about these directions, please feel free to call our office for clarification. The number is **(903) 939-2929**.

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