

Passover (Part 1)

The Importance of Keeping it Properly

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Down through the ages of the history of God's church, in both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant times, there have been two observances that have come under attack more than any of the others. One of them is the weekly Sabbath. If Satan succeeds in turning people away from observing this, he also succeeds in turning people away from the holy days, because both the weekly Sabbath and the holy days hang together. In doing that, he thus successfully destroys the identifying sign between God and His people; and he succeeds in cutting them off from God as well—through the sin of breaking His Sabbath.

The other is Passover. Passover is once again under attack—even as it was in the '70s, and in the '50s, and undoubtedly in the '40s and '30s as well. It seems as though hardly a year or two (or, at least, a decade) goes by without the Passover being under attack in some way or another.

I think that many of us are aware of what has been called by the historians "the Quartodecimani Controversy." *Quartodecimani* is Latin, and it means fourteen. This controversy took place in the second and third centuries AD, in which there was a very strong attempt to try to do away with the Passover altogether. The Western church, under the bishop of Rome, succeeded in doing so; and they replaced the observance of Passover with an Easter observance that followed what they called 'Good Friday.'

They labeled it as "Judaizing" and made it a scandal for a person to keep the Passover. In fact, I believe (from the things that I have read) that they even brought down upon those who decided to keep it "the power of the state."

However, the keeping of Passover continued in what would have been the Eastern churches—in what eventually developed, I guess, into the Eastern Orthodox area. Those people continued to keep the Passover on the fourteenth day. Those churches, primarily, were located in what we know today as Asia Minor.

I wonder if you knew that, long before Jesus Christ, the Jews had already tinkered with the observation of the Passover and succeeded in moving it from the fourteenth to the fifteenth. (I think that some of you are undoubtedly aware of it.) They succeeded not only in moving it from the fourteenth to the fifteenth; but they also succeeded in blending Passover together with the Days of Unleavened Bread—and reduced an eight day festival observance into seven days. In fact, I am going to show you much later (not in this sermon, but later on) where there is one place where it can actually be counted as six days. That is, the Jewish observation of it.

What we have to consider is why would Satan take such pains on the observation of one festival? Could it possibly be because it is exceedingly important to God's purpose?

I think that most of us understand clearly that Israel went into captivity because of *idolatry* and *Sabbath breaking*. (That is very clearly shown in Ezekiel 20.) Satan succeeded in blinding

the Israelites to both the true God and His true purpose, even though they were a religious people. You remember what Paul wrote of them in Romans 10: 2. He said that the Jews of his day were a people who had "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." They were off base; but they were zealous. They were 'religious.'

How important is the Passover to God's purpose? Well, it is so important that it is the foundation of the New Covenant relationship between God and His people! In the Old Covenant (in the Old Testament), God began His covenant relationship with Israel on the Passover. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ began the New Covenant relationship for Christians on the last Passover night before His crucifixion by introducing the new symbols for the commemoration of the sacrifice of Himself as the true Passover Lamb.

Now, we are going to spend a little bit of time on this at the very beginning of this sermon. And so I want you to turn with me to John 1: 29. I am going to be using a good deal more scriptural references than I normally do. A lot of them are not going to require a great deal of expounding. But each scripture, I think, is going to be very clear within the context of this sermon.

The speaker is John the Baptist and he is commenting on his cousin—Jesus Christ. It was something that God, by inspiration of His Spirit, must have given him an understanding of. We know that this took place after John baptized Jesus.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

That ought to give you, at least, a beginning of an insight (maybe a great deal of insight) and discernment regarding the importance of the death of Jesus Christ. *One* death of *one* man—the *sacrifice of a life that was sinless*—is capable, in the eyes of God, of equalizing and "making of no account" *all* of the sins of *all* of mankind for *all* of the time that man has been sinning!

It is interesting to see the way "sin" is looked at in the New Testament. Sin is seen as an infectious disease—something that has gotten into a person and something that that person is capable of 'passing on' to someone else. In other words, they can 're-infect' another person; and that person will then be a carrier of this disease [sin] too. It is something that is internal, but it is something that can be spread.

We might think of it in terms of AIDS. We fear AIDS, do we not? We want to be separated from AIDS, right? So, you see that lurking in the background of this view of sin is the idea of *quarantine*. As long as a person was infected with a disease, they were quarantined away from other people; and they had no relationship with those who were "clean" (in the Old Testament sense). That is because those who were *clean* did not want to become infected by those who were *defiled* by the disease.

Jesus, then, is seen as the cure that will enable this infected person to come out of their quarantine and, thus, have a relationship with others. In this case, they are introduced to a relationship with God! It's a beautiful, very interesting, and colorful picture.

If we can understand it, that is the kind of effect that this sacrifice will have upon *all* of the sins of *all* of mankind—every individual who has ever lived! Jesus Christ's sacrifice is the "cure" that

will enable these people, who have been "quarantined away," to move into a relationship with God.

I Corinthians 5:5-6 To deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

There is that "infection" shown there: Leaven being a *type* of "sin." If sin is present, there is a very strong possibility that others are going to be infected by it. A little bit of sin will infect the whole lump, meaning the whole group, the whole congregation.

I Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.

That is what the sacrifice of Christ affects. It purges the infection away from the individual who, in faith, accepts that sacrifice and repents.

Tie these two verses together. You have a very clear description of the place that Jesus Christ played in "the type" that was enacted out (all the way back in Exodus 12) some fourteen or fifteen hundred years prior to its actual occurrence. Jesus Christ is the true Passover Lamb sacrificed for the entire world, in order that God may *pass over* the sins of all of mankind.

How long was this on God's mind? That is, His purpose of having a sacrifice—thus enabling Him to pay for the sins of mankind? We know that *sin kills* and, if a person is required to pay for his own sin, then he dies—because "the wages of sin is death." Well, God purposed (it says, "long before the foundation of the world") that, once sin began, the only way that it could be paid for would be through the death of either (1) the individual who sinned *or* (2) a substitution who could take the place of those who sinned. But that substitution had to be sinless! And we find that this death had to be of One who was greater than all of the creation.

Revelation 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him [meaning "the Beast"], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life [a further description of those who will worship the Beast] of the Lamb [We just identified Him, in John 1:29.] slain from the foundation of the world.

There is the payment. And "from the foundation of the world" God had this in mind. Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as our (or, mankind's) *Passover*, there is no remission of sins—no forgiveness of sins, by God the Father. And so we find that this event is the beginning of eternal life for us. Without it, there is no eternal life—because each person then will die in his sins, because he will then be required to pay for his own sins, himself.

Hebrews 7:26 For such a High Priest [Jesus Christ] was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.

Absolutely clean, absolutely innocent—absolutely undefiled. There is no spot on His record whatever. He was never tarnished by anything so that He would be blemished; and He is, therefore, a perfect sacrifice.

Hebrews 7:27 Who does not need daily, as those high priests [meaning those high priests of the ceremonial system that God Himself established], to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins [because He had none; but those priests had to offer up sacrifices first of all for themselves because they sinned] and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

That *one sacrifice* is sufficient for all of time, for all of man's sins. *Once for all* He offered up Himself! That tells you something too. It was voluntary (even though it was within God's plan). Nobody "took" life from Him. He gave it.

Hebrews 10:10a By that will [That "will" is the will of God; that is, what He purposed.] we have been sanctified....

"Sanctified" means to be declared in a state different from others, set apart. By God's purpose we have been sanctified.

Hebrews 10:10b...through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This is what separates Christians from the rest of mankind—the fact that God has revealed *His purpose* to them. They have seen the purpose of Jesus Christ within that purpose. They have believed on Him, accepted His sacrifice, repented of their sins; and, as a result, God then puts those people into a different category from the rest of mankind (to whom that has not been revealed). *Sanctified*, in its simplest usage, simply means to be set aside, but it carries the connotation of being *set aside, by God, for a holy use*.

So, by means of one perfect Sacrifice that applies to all people, for all time, who accept it by faith, God thus lays the foundation for us to share in the inheritance and the glory of GOD for all eternity.

Let us go a little bit further. This time we are going to turn to Matthew 26: 26, as we continue to lay the foundation for this series on the Passover. Here, on this occasion, we see Matthew's recording of the events that occurred on the last night of Jesus Christ's life, when He had His last Passover meal with His disciples. It was here that He instituted the new symbols representing His body and blood. (Here I mean the "new symbols" for the proper keeping of the

Passover.)

Matthew 26:26-28 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Jesus Christ, then, commanded His followers—all who have repented of their sins and, by faith, accepted His blood of the sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins—to partake of the New Testament symbols as a solemn *memorial* of His death. Each of these occasions—that is, when His death is memorialized—is to be a *renewal* of the New Covenant believer's relationship with God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Notice that He said in Luke 22, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Now, what are "memorials"? A memorial is an occasion dedicated to remembering events of great importance on the date of that event. Memorials are occasions dedicated to remembering events of great importance; and those memorials are held on the date of that event.

Thus, in the United States, we keep Independence Day on July the fourth. Not on July the fifth, not on July the third, but on the day that memorializes our independence. So then, every year it is memorialized on the date that our independence was declared.

Let us go back into the Old Testament, to Deuteronomy 30:15-19. I want to begin here, because this is a series of verses of very solemn significance. I want to bring this up in regard to Passover because I want to impress on each and every one of us that properly keeping Passover is a matter of no small importance. Hang on to that!

Deuteronomy 30:15a See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

Now, think of this in terms of Passover. You, obviously, are familiar with these verses; and you understand that God is going to *ask* us to choose. Then He is going to *command* us to choose. And He is going to command us to choose what is right and good. If we do that, we live. If we choose the other, we die. So, how important is Passover? Think of it in these terms.

Deuteronomy 30:16a In that I command you today to love the LORD your God.

What is the Bible's definition of love? It is the keeping of the commands of God. We express love to God, and to our fellow man, by keeping the commands of God.

Deuteronomy 30:16a I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply.

The implication is already that *if* we choose not to love God (by keeping His commands) *then* we are choosing to die.

Deuteronomy 30:16b And the LORD your God will bless you in the land, which you go to possess.

Now, think of that in human terms. Do you not love to "bless" those whom you love? Sure you do. "That's the way to life," God is saying. "You love Me; and I will bless you,"—because He loves to bless those who love Him.

Deuteronomy 30:17-20 But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice [Notice how those two are connected.], and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Again, think of that in terms of Passover. Where is our *life*? I told you, just a few minutes before, that *eternal life* (which is what the Bible, most of the time, has in mind) begins with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He was our Passover, the Lamb of God. That is where eternal life begins.

Are we going to choose to continue to follow through memorializing that event? Well, we will go on. There is no way that I can diminish the importance of Passover to us, when we begin to look at it in this regard. It is a matter of life and death. Think of it in these terms.

What if Israel—prior to the going out, prior to the death angel going over—decided to choose not to follow God's commands regarding the Passover? What would have been the results? They would have died! It is that simple. Keeping Passover correctly is a matter of life and death.

Now, obviously, there are some things in regards to keeping Passover that are more important than others. But consider, as a whole, that the keeping of Passover correctly has to be done—if we are going to live!

Let us go back to the book of Romans, and we will add a New Testament emphasis to what I have just said. This is a verse that I already quoted, somewhat, before in this sermon.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus Christ is our Passover, slain for us for the remission of sins. Without His sacrifice, we will die in our sins. With that in mind, let us go back to the book of John, and we will see just how important keeping Passover is.

John 6:53 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

Remember the symbols? The bread represents His broken body. The wine represents His shed blood. That is what we literally *eat*—the symbols of His body and the symbols of His blood. IF you do not "eat" the flesh of the Son of Man and "drink" His blood, THEN you have no "life" in you. The proper keeping of the Passover is a matter of life and death just as surely as it was in the Old Testament, when God passed over the homes of the Israelites!

Now here is a clear, dogmatic statement in John 6:53. There is no middle ground. There is no compromise. *The annual reaffirmation of the covenant—through the Passover—is at the heart and core of an on-going relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father.* I do not believe that I can over-emphasize it, because it begins eternal life. It begins the plan of God. And if we cannot get past the simplicity of the Passover, how are we ever going to go on to perfection?

John 6:55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.

The implication is "food that gives life" and "drink that gives life."

John 6:56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

"Abides" means lives in, or dwells in. It has the force, or the thrust, of continuing in. In other words, He is telling us here that IF we are going to continue to live in Him (from the time that we, by faith, accept His blood and repent), THEN we are going to have to keep renewing. That is, keep eating of His bread and drinking of His blood—because that gives *life*. Do you see the symbolism that is here? It is very clear.

John 6:57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

I think that we all understand that repentance and accepting the blood of Jesus Christ begins the process that leads to salvation. So, in verses 55-57, He is affirming to us that salvation (which is the completion of the process) comes as a result of the continuance of the relationship through the reaffirmation of the covenant—that is, through Passover.

Let us carry this a little further. Right at the beginning here, I really want to build a case so that you and I will all understand how important Passover is to the purpose of God. Brethren, Israel never would have gotten out of Egypt if God had not *passed over* their sins. They would have never started on the road to their inheritance. You cannot reach the inheritance unless you start. And now, we have just found that God said that not only can you not "start" without it, you have to keep reaffirming it year by year. And that reaffirmation is part of the process that *continues us on* to salvation.

Let us go to John's account of that last Passover.

John 13:8-9, 14-15 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, [Listen to this!] "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." [That is pretty clear.] ... "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

Actually, it more literally reads that we are *duty bound* to do as He did.

Do you want eternal life? If the answer is "Yes," then we are to *do* as He commanded. That includes the footwashing, the partaking of the bread, and the partaking of the wine. All three of them hang together and are part of the New Testament keeping of the Passover.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

This action of Christ's is so essential—it is so vital to keep the true New Testament Passover—that one cannot have eternal life without it! Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.

The apostles understood this. Back in Acts 4, we come across an occasion in which Peter and John were used to heal a man who had been infirmed for over forty years. Of course, that excited a crowd of on-lookers, because this man was well known. Peter then took the opportunity, of a crowd gathering, to preach about Jesus Christ. What he said here is important in regard to the understanding of the importance of Jesus Christ, and His sacrifice, to you and me.

Acts 4: 10-12 "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other [There is no salvation through any other.], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

That phrase, "*by which we must*," means that it is absolutely obligatory.

Now, think of this. Probably the most famous verse in all of the Bible is John 3:16.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

I do not need to go on. We have seen a fairly detailed description of what He gave Him for. He gave Him so that He might die as the payment for our sins, in order that the requirements of God's law might be met, in order that we might be able to live beyond the normal lifespan of seventy years, and be resurrected into the Kingdom of God.

Once we have come to the place where we understand this—and we believe, and we want to commit ourselves to it—it places upon us responsibilities and obligations. The first obligation is *to repent*. And I would have to say that co-equal with it is *to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ*. And then *to commit ourselves, through a complete immersion* (That is, a burial in a watery grave and then a resurrection from that grave.) *to a new life that is dedicated to, committed to, obedience to Jesus Christ*. And, by this means, then we have the beginning of eternal life and are made co-heirs with Jesus Christ to the promises that were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the responsibility does not end there! It includes *our obedience to His commands*. That is the other side of the covenant, the other side of the agreement.

It is as though God says this: "Look, if you will give Me your life, I will give you this in return. I will give you the forgiveness of sins. I will give you My Holy Spirit. I will give you access to Me. But you have to give Me your life in obedience, in order that I might work with you and that I might create Myself in you. That you might have My mind, My heart, My character! My very nature! My attitudes!"

That takes cooperation on our part because God has given us free moral agency. So we have to choose. (Back to Deuteronomy 30 again.) And life becomes a matter of choices that, by faith, we will ourselves to submit to the rules—to the government—of God. So our response has to be *"loving obedience."* We should be able to do this. In fact, the apostle John said: "We love Him because He first loved us." (I John 4:19)

He [God] stuck His neck out. It is almost as if there is no guarantee of 'a return'. But He was willing to sacrifice Himself in the hope that our response to the demonstration of His love, through His Son, would fill us with such a sense of obligation and admiration that we, in turn, would dedicate our lives in obedience to Him.

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

That is so plain. That is how we demonstrate love to God—to submit to Him through His commands.

John 14:21, 23a He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." ... Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word."

He is just rearranging the words here. And really He means *all of His words*. (Not just a couple. Not just a few.)

John 14:23b-24 And My Father will love him, and We will come to him [or, abide with him] and make Our home with [or, dwell with] him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."

I am going to give you these verses out of a different translation. It is kind of an interesting translation, because the person put the verbs into their proper tense; and you will notice a difference immediately.

John 14:15 If you are loving Me, the commandments--namely, My commandments--you will be keeping.

Do you see the difference between the way it is in that translation and the way it is in most of our English translations? He is showing that the keeping of God's commandments is an on-going, continuous, process. It is not something that we just do every once in a while. But, rather, it is *a way of life* with us.

John 14:21 The one having My commandments and who is keeping them, this is the one who is loving Me. And the one who is loving Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will be loving him and will be manifesting Myself to him.

It is a process. It has a beginning. It has an end. And it is actively moving toward that "end."

John 14:23-24 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone is loving Me, he will be keeping My word; and My Father will be loving him, and We will come to him and We will make Our abode with him. The one who is not loving Me is not keeping My words; and the word which you are hearing is not Mine but the Father who sent Me."

What we have just read there is the whole meaning of life for a Christian. If we are loving Christ, we will be keeping His commandments; and they are from the Father.

I think that we understand that there is a "pseudo-Christianity" out there which uses the name of Jesus Christ, but refuses to do His Will.

Matthew 7:21-22 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven [That is, is obedient.] Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord,

Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?"

We can begin to see where true Christianity lies. Not in "great actions" that are done before people but in the common, every day, obedience to God. Whether anybody else actually sees it or not, God knows.

Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!

That is, iniquity. The Greek word is "*anomia*." It means "against law." Thus, those who are not obedient, or those who did not make the right choices. They choose death. Most people, on the face of this earth, are on that broad path that is leading to destruction.

I John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Love is keeping the commandments. Love is submitting to God. God has other qualities; but He is, primarily, known by this one. He wants His children to be known by this too. So, as we obey His commands, we are showing love toward God and love toward neighbor.

I John 4:9-11, 16 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love [Actually, in the Greek, it says "In this is *the love*..." The definite article is there.], not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another....And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides [or, continues; or, lives] in love abides in God, and God in him.

I think that is very clear. Our keeping of the commandments, which is love, is our response to God's love—first to Him, and then out to our fellow man.

What is the way to understand God, and to understand His way? It is to obey Him. As the psalmist says:

Psalms 111:10 A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.

That verse does not stand alone; and we know that there are other qualities that need to be added to that. He also shows that we need to be intelligent. We also need to approach Him, and His Word, in a childlike way. God expects us to use our intellect. He expects us to search the Scriptures and to compare one Scripture with another, if we are going to understand His way.

God purposely had the Bible written in the way that He did, in order that people would have *to search out* His truth.

The "truths," regarding Passover, are not all in one place. They are all over the place and they are built on the principle that is here in Isaiah 28.

Isaiah 28:9-11 "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? [No.] Those just drawn from the breasts? [No; but, you see, a person has to start there.] For [Here is how it comes.] precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." [It is like a person stammering where things are somewhat disconnected and yet they are also connected.] For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people.

But the principle is there, to be fully grounded on. That is, in order to understand the doctrine, we must study it *line upon line*.

The apostle Paul said basically the same thing. We're going to go back to 2 Timothy.

II Timothy 2:14 Remind them of these things [Paul writes to Timothy.], charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

That ought to tell us something. There are people who like to argue about words. But we are going to understand, and we are going to see, that the Bible defines its own terms.

II Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker [You have to *work* at this.] who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Or, it more appropriately means *straightly cutting*. That is, to cut by the shortest distance between two points; to make a straight line; to plow in a straight direction. And so it is with God's Word. God's Word is called *the Word of Truth*.

Back in John 14, we pick up another principle. We find that those of us who have received the Spirit of God—what we 'have' Jesus calls "the Spirit of truth."

John 14:17a Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive

And we understand that is because they are not submissive to receiving it.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy spirit [that is, the Spirit of truth], whom the Father will send in My name, it will teach you all things, and

bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

The Word of truth agrees with the Spirit of truth; and we will be led into "truth" by that Spirit of truth.

Now, it ought to be obvious that the carnal mind (as Romans 8: 7 says) is enmity against God. It lacks "a quality" for understanding the truth of God. Anything that is at war against God is not going to be open to accepting the Spirit of truth, nor the Word of truth. But such a mind, indeed, can come up with clever arguments that do nothing more than 'blur' the situation.

Even though this person may be highly intelligent (having all kinds of 'letters' behind his name, and before his name)—it does not mean a thing when we are dealing with spiritual things. And what is going to happen inevitably is that the person is going to come up with part of the truth; but they are not going to get enough of it, because they are not subject to it. It will be hidden from them. They simply do not have "the tool" that is necessary.

And thus it is that people of, we might say, lower intelligence level—but they nonetheless have the right childlike attitude and they have the Spirit of God, they have repented, they are obeying God as best they know how—these people will "see it" and "get it."

Another thing to add to here is what Jeremiah said.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?

God "knows" it; and a person having the Spirit of God can "know" it too. They can see it in themselves. But we have to be careful, because that spirit—that mind, that heart—still lurks in each of us. It can blur the matter too, because it wants to stick with that which is carnal.

I Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

There it is again—"*those who love Him.*" That is tied to understanding the Bible. "*A good understanding have all they that do His commandments.*" In verse 9, basically what He is saying is that the *things of the spirit* are not discerned by human intelligence on its own. God is not saying that "intelligence" is not needful; but He is saying there has to be a quality (an entity) that is added to that human intelligence—because it is simply not carnally, or physically, discernible.

I Corinthians 2:10, 14 But [Notice the contrast.] God has revealed them to us through His Spirit [The Spirit of truth, who will guide us into all truth.]. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him [He has a carnal mind; he has a

deceitful heart; and, even though he may be very intelligent, they are foolishness to him.]nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Now there you have, in a nutshell, *why* there is so much confusion regarding the Passover. The Bible is not confusing regarding the Passover! Certainly, the parts that give us the picture are not all in one place. "Line upon line, precept upon precept." But the Spirit of truth will so that we will be able to see where the truth lies.

So this study that we are going into, is designed to find truth! We are not trying to find a religious position in order to agree with some sort of doctrinal committee at all, or some kind of doctrinal board, or try to uphold a previous position—because, brethren, those things do not matter a hoot. Paul said, "God is not mocked." We cannot fool Him. If we are honest, do not we want to believe Him? We cannot put anything over on Him. So we had better have an honest search for truth!

We are going to go into this systematically, practically, step by step, verse by verse. And we are going to begin with those Scriptures that are easiest to understand; and work towards those that are more difficult to understand. That is the logical way to do it. To find the ones that are clear, and then you make the ones that are difficult agree with the ones that are clear. Not make the ones that are 'clear' agree with the ones that are difficult; and try to force them into something that God never intended for them to be forced into.

We are going to let the Bible prove, and interpret, its own terms. We are going to look for the "context" in which something appears—verses before and verses after. The chapter before and the chapter after—wherever those things are applicable. And, in some cases, we are going to allow practically the entire Bible to be the "context" in which something appears.

In a way, that is what I have done here. I have taken *two events* and fit them into the whole purpose of God. That is, (1) the Passover that began things back at the exodus and (2) the Passover that began things for us, in eternal life. And we have seen them within the context of God's whole purpose. The one is physically important—a *matter of life and death* to the Israelites in Egypt. The other is spiritually important—a *matter of life and death* to those of us who are heading toward God's "Promised Land" in the Kingdom of God.

Sometimes we are going to have to look at what the scripture *does not say*. We are going to have to look at who wrote these things. (Sometimes that is important.) We are going to have to look, at times, *at whom* it was written to. (Sometimes that is important.) But *opinions*, no matter how strongly we may feel them, are just "opinions"—unless the Bible clearly shows that they are true and valid.

Where do we begin? *What does the term "Passover" mean?* That is where we have to begin. What does the term Passover mean? Where does it get its name? That may seem almost a childish question; but to the "scholars" that is a point to be argued about.

I am going to quote from "The Passover in the Bible and the Church Today" by Drs. Robert Kuhn and Lester Grabbe, published in 1977; and this appears on page 14:

One final point, a minor one, concerns the name Passover itself. It has sometimes been thought that the name came from the passing over [Notice, "it has sometimes been thought..."] of the Death Angel, and that this could mean that the entire festival has to be on the fourteenth.

Do you see how important this is? If, indeed, the Passover is named after the *passing over*, then everything has to be done on the fourteenth. That is how important that "little" point is! These men, of course, are against a Passover on the fourteenth. [Continuing from their article:]

However, the exact origin of the name is disputed by scholars; and such etymological arguments can never carry a great weight in any discussion.

That sounds like the way evolutionists talk. That is almost unbelievable.

If you ask a Jew today what the Passover commemorates, he would (in all likelihood) say that it commemorates the exodus from Egypt. But is that what the Bible teaches? No, not at all. The scriptures define the meaning because it was named for *an event that God performed*.

Exodus 12:24-27 And you shall observe this thing [The 'thing' that he is talking about is the Passover.] as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be [Here it comes.], when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

The day and the sacrifice are named after the event that God performed when He *passed over* the children of Israel. It does not memorialize, it does not commemorate, the going out of Egypt. It memorializes, it commemorates, God *passing over* (sparing) the Israelites.

Leviticus 23:4a, 5-6 These are the feasts....On the *fourteenth day* if the first month *at twilight* is *the LORD's Passover*. And on the *fifteenth day* of the same month is *the Feast of Unleavened Bread* to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

The Passover is established to commemorate God's *passing over*. Nothing could be plainer—to anybody who is of a mind to believe God! We are dealing with two different events, two different days, and two different festivals—one on the fourteenth, and one on the fifteenth.

I am going to read from Flavius Josephus, from "Antiquities of the Jews" book II, chapter 14, section 6. Josephus was a Jewish historian who wrote somewhere, probably, in the 90s A.D.

Whence it is that we do still offer this sacrifice [He's talking about the Passover.] in like manner to this day, and call this festival *Pascha*, which signifies *the feast of the passover*; because on that day God passed over us, and sent the plague upon the Egyptians; for the destruction of the first-born came upon the Egyptians that night.

He understood. The Passover is named after God's passing over. The sacrifice of the lamb takes its name from God passing over. The day is not named after the sacrifice. The sacrifice is named after the event that took place on that day—and, of course, made it possible for God (because of His law) to *pass over*.

Again from Josephus, the same book (book II), this time from chapter 15, section I:

So the Hebrews went out of Egypt, while the Egyptians wept, and repented that they had treated them so hardly. ... Whence it is that, in memory of the want we were then in [That is, slavery.], we keep a feast for eight days, which is called the feast of unleavened bread.

A different event altogether! They "went out" on the fifteenth. The Passover took place on the fourteenth. The Passover commemorates the "passing over." The Feast of Unleavened Bread memorializes, and commemorates, the "going out."

Let me summarize to this point:

- 1) We have seen the importance of the Passover in both the Old and the New Covenants. It is a matter of life and death.
- 2) The Passover is named for God's "passing over" (not the "going out" from Egypt).
- 3) Passover and Unleavened Bread are two separate memorials.

In the next sermon, we will see what it means to keep the Passover. And we will also see what "between the two evenings" (or "twilight," or "dusk" depending on the translation) means. We will see (1) what is involved in keeping the Passover and (2) what "between the two evenings" means. We will let the Bible define those two things for us; and we'll come to *the truth*, without having to go externally.