

Does Doctrine Really Matter? (Part 6)

Passover and Wave-sheaf Dating

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In the previous sermon of this series given on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread I briefly mentioned a report on a survey regarding elements important to a successful marriage taken at the United feast site in Branson, Missouri. The survey showed conversion as being only of secondary importance in peoples' minds.

The disturbing thing about that particular response was that it came from the Church of God members who apparently do not grasp the fact that what they believe spiritually is going to affect *everything* having to do with relationships in a major way. The lack of conversion is the source of many marital problems. Faith in God and conversion to His way of thinking is the solution that the entire world is looking for, and does not know that this is what they are looking for.

Now what do the members think Jesus Christ is going to do when He returns? What do they think that *they* are going to be doing if and when they are in the Kingdom of God at that time?

Brethren, the first order of business in the World Tomorrow after the initial problems are put down through warfare, is working to convert people to God's way of life so what had just happened will not happen again. This job is going to be to help people *believe* God so that they will cooperate with God and with each other, rather than compete. Conversion will free them so that they can live abundant lives liberated from many of the fears, jealousies, and desires that dominate this present evil world. Some, brethren, do not seem to be able to make the practical connection and applications between what we are learning in personal study, Sabbath sermons, and Bible Studies to the point that we will show then what we really believe by actually doing.

All of us struggle with truly believing God means what He says, and that "*all*" includes the ministry. I know that I have had my blind spots, and I am sure that because I am human that I still have, and will have them occasionally as long as I am in the flesh. But at the same time, that does not excuse me or anybody else from not appealing to God to rid me of them, and at the same time striving to submit to and overcome what He shows me.

I have had a number of experiences with doctrinal blindness I would like to share with you. These experiences involve major doctrines that have included both Church of God ministers and lay members who, for some reason, cannot see what is plainly written in God's word.

We are going to begin in II Corinthians 11:3.

II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The key word in this verse for the purpose of this sermon is "simplicity." The Greek word literally means "singleness." It means "direct." Perhaps you can understand it better if I give you antonyms. The antonyms for this word are "crafty," "twisted," "deceitful," or "wondering." God's word means what it says, and He says what He means.

Zodhiates says the word "simplicity" in this verse indicates "frankness." There is the direct part. It indicates frankness, and we are to then conclude that God's word is not full of double meanings and ulterior motives. He is not trying to hide things from His children by deliberately making things hard. He does indeed make us search and dig for information, because the evidence may be virtually anywhere in the book, but the verses themselves are not convoluted. Things are hidden from the world, but God's purpose for us is to reveal by His spirit.

Very much of the problem in this failure to understand is confirmed in Romans 8:7, which says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is the carnal mind, combined with human vanity, which is the desire to puff one's self up as being better, smarter, or whatever, than others.

I am going to share some experiences that I have had involving the dates on which Passover falls, and then also Pentecost when Passover day falls on a weekly Sabbath. We are going to look into these briefly because the examples fit into this series on how people do not believe what the Scriptures clearly say. When I say "briefly," I mean briefly. If you will recall, I think that I gave ten sermons on Passover, and so they can really be stretched out by going into every last detail. I am just going to use a couple of selected examples that I think illustrate clearly how people just ignore what is right in front of us.

First of all I want to give you two principles of interpretation. Mr. Armstrong taught us that one should use *clear* scriptures to interpret vague ones. Not the other way around. You use the clear ones to interpret the vague ones.

Secondly, never build a doctrine around the interpretation of a word. Word usage often changes over time. Everyone of us should be able to relate to the example of "gay" from "happy" to "homosexual. How in the world do you do that? But the word has changed. Its usage has changed, and virtually every word might be subject to the same kind of evolution.

The disagreement regarding Passover date is when it is to be observed. Is it to be observed as the 13th day of the first month ends and the 14th day begins, or when the 14th day ends and the 15th day begins? Now there is no disagreement regarding when *Jesus* kept it. You would think that He is the standard for everybody in Christianity. Jesus kept it at the *beginning* of the 14th. That ought to be the end of the argument, but some see problems harmonizing the way Jesus did it with the order of directions given in Exodus 12 and the way the Jews do it. The Jews keep it at the *end* of the 14th and on into the 15th.

Leviticus 23:4-6 These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

That is really clear. Passover on the 14th. Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th. So we have separate festivals—Passover and Unleavened Bread—related in terms of teaching, and side by side in terms of observance, but on different days. Some argue that Passover service is to be kept as the 14th ends; therefore they begin keeping Passover at the end of the 14th even though it carries into the 15th. They say that since they began it then (at the end of the 14th), they are actually keeping it on the 14th. But if one does this, I can guarantee you that over time the distinctive teaching of each festival is going to become blurred and blended, and the two separate festivals are going to become one. The Jews are a historical example. To them the Days of Unleavened Bread have been virtually forgotten.

In order to support their "end of the 14th observance"—those who believe Passover should be kept at the end of the fourteenth—perceive to cobble together a convoluted explanation to justify this. This gets very involved with all kinds of obscure word meanings requiring arcane technical manuals. Now just a minute! I have gone that route, and it does not have to be done.

Let me ask you something. How many people, since God began communicating with man, have a *Strong's Concordance* in their hip pocket? How about *A Theological Word Book of the New Testament*? How about *A Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*? How about *Zodhiates*? How about *Vine's*? How about *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the Bible*, or *the Hebrew Concordance of the Bible*? How about a whole library of commentaries?

Brethren, the truth of God is not that complicated. Is conversion only for those who have a whole library of technical manuals? God has watched over the translation of His word, and those reference works, though they might be helpful at times, are not absolutely necessary to know correct doctrine. God has written the Bible so a called, careful, and normally educated person can understand its truth.

Exodus 12:10-12 And you shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remains of it until the morning, you shall burn with fire. And thus shall you eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

Exodus 12:21-23 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin: and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

Exodus 12:29-38 And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses: and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

Exodus 12:42 It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt; this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

A basic pattern, you might say, is that the first twenty verses God is speaking to Moses. Beginning in verse 21, Moses then speaks to the Israelites, and then a record of what occurred a little bit later in that particular night. There is no difference between the instructions that God gave to Moses and what Moses gave to the Israelites.

There are several words I want to emphasize here: the word *morning* in verse 10; the word *haste* in verse 11. There are frequent mentions of the word *house*; *your house* in quite a number of verses. The word *midnight* in verse 29. The phrase *six hundred thousand men* in verse 37; *mixed multitude* in verse 38; *a very large number of livestock* in verse 38; and finally *night* in verse 42.

I will give you a brief explanation, but I will begin it with this overall instruction. Every one of these words that I singled out means *exactly* what it says. There is nothing mysterious or hidden. Taken together, they provide a clear picture of the logistics of this event. I will explain the word "logistics," because it is not one we tend to know the meaning of even though we might be familiar with the word.

Logistics concerns the organization, movement, and implementation of a plan, usually one involving large numbers of people. The word is most frequently associated with military matters.

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They were to remain in their homes until *morning*. When is morning to you? When *is* it? Morning meant the same thing to ancient Israelites as it does to us today. It means *dawn*—the breaking of day. It is exactly the same word that appears many times in Genesis 1: evening and morning. What does morning mean there? Does it not mean the daylight portion of a 24-hour day—one half of 24 hours? That is *exactly* what it means here—the daylight portion of the day.

I do want to go to one place in Mark the 13th chapter where Jesus defined what a day is. Actually He is defining the *night* portion of the day, but you cannot help but compare what Jesus said to what Moses wrote in Exodus. They are speaking the same language you might say.

Mark 13:35 Watch you therefore: for you know not when the master of the house comes, at even [that is twilight], or at midnight, [roughly 12 o'clock], or at the cockcrowing [roughly 3 a.m.] or in the morning [daylight].

Is that not simple? You allow Jesus to define morning, and He does it. It is the daylight portion. They had to stay in their homes until daylight—the breaking of dawn.

Now they were *to eat in haste*. Again, the Hebrew word means the same as the English word. We will see in just a while why they were to eat in haste. This word has an additional interesting aspect to it. It comes from a root meaning "to be startled,"—to make a quick jerking movement kind of thing. In other words "haste" might be translated "trepidation"—when your skin crawls and you are kind of put at fear. This fear aspect was shown very well in Cecil B. DeMille's production of "The Ten Commandments" movie, with Charlton Heston. The Israelites kept the Passover hearing the wails from the Egyptian homes struck by death, and they were fearful for their lives too. The actors portrayed that pretty well.

Exodus 12:22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason: and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

This is an instruction specifically for those people in Egypt. Moses gave them instruction right on the spot there in Egypt. They were not to go out of *their houses* until morning—until the break of day. When the Death Angel passed through, *they were in their houses*. They were not in the city of Rameses. I will tell you why in just a little bit. Again, the movie shows this reasonably well. They were in their homes when the Death Angel passed through.

The great bulk of the Israelites was spread out in Goshen. Goshen is not a single-city name, but a large area, like a county name. This is a major reason why they had to eat, dress for travel, and in haste, because when the night was over they had to travel, to walk from their home to the gathering and departure place. It is just like when the sun came up, they were on their way because they had a bit of distance to travel.

The word "midnight" gives us a general handle on when one of the major events of this logistic problem took place. It does not mean exactly 12 o'clock, but simply during the middle watch of the dark period of the 24-hour day. So twelve o'clock, one o'clock, right around in that area.

The next term I want you to think about is "six hundred thousand men." This was the size of their fighting force. It is a very interesting figure because it indicates a population of somewhere between 2 and 3 million people when you add women and children, and old men and old women, and so forth to the 600 thousand. This is a conservative guesstimate, because no one knows for sure. But demographers report that if everything worked perfectly, considering modern birth and death rates, the Israelites could have numbered as high as 6 million people. If you cut that figure to 2 to 3 million, it seems a reasonable conservative figure.

But I want you to think... even if it was 2 or 3 million people, that is a large number of people! That population is larger than the population of the city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County combined. It is 25% of the population of the Los Angeles basin. It is equal to the population of Chicago, larger than the population of Philadelphia, and larger than at least 15 individual entire states in the United States.

In addition to these Israelites, there was also a mixed-multitude of *non*-Israelitish people who are not counted in that group. Focus on the word *multitude*. It means exactly that. It means chief, great, many, abundant. In addition to all these, there was a very large number of cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, and whatever besides. This was a major operation.

Now finally the word *night* in Exodus 12: 42. "It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt." That word "*night*" means exactly what it says: the dark part of a 24-hour day. The Israelites left Egypt in the dark part of a 24-hour day. They walked out of Egypt *by night* at the beginning of the 15th—24 hours after the events of the 14th began.

The Israelites were well instructed and organized to accomplish this in the order of events as follows: They selected the lamb on the 10th. They held it until dusk, or twilight, between the two evenings, as the 13th ended and the 14th began. They killed the goat or lamb, whichever it was, poured its blood into a basin, then skinned it, and then roasted the whole lamb or goat, which must have taken at least a couple of hours. They then proceeded to eat it while still in their homes, dressed to depart as soon as morning arrived.

At the break of day they left their homes behind, and began their trek to the gathering place from which they would leave the territory of Egypt proper. That place is named in my *King James Bible* as Rameses. But modern scholars believe that it was a city by the name of Qantir. It really does not matter very much, because both were located in the same basic area of Egypt.

This city was just outside Goshen, but a walk for the Israelites averaging somewhere between 10 or 12 miles for 2-1/2 million men, women, children, old men, old women, pregnant women, children of all ages, all of their belongings they could carry, donkeys, cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, and carts to carry things. Once they got into Rameses, they had to be organized *there*. It took hours for this to be done.

I have heard Church of God ministers who have said that they were already in Rameses when

this process began. But if they were already in Rameses, *where were their houses?* What door lintels did they splash the blood upon?

Do you have any idea of the impact of two and one-half million people coming into a city? Brethren, I have seen with my own eyes and experienced it myself being in the Rose Bowl when there were 100 thousand people there. I have seen 100 thousand people at one time emptying out of that place, and what a tremendous traffic jam of walking people that was.

I have seen the Rose Parade whenever a million people come into Pasadena to watch that thing. You can hardly move in the city of Pasadena at that time, because the pedestrian traffic is so thick. You can hardly do a thing. We are talking about 20 times that many in the Rose Bowl, and 2-1/2 times that size of people who come in to watch the Rose Parade.

Rameses is so small they can barely find it. No brethren, they were in their own homes, just like God commanded them. Why did God make them do that? He made them stay as a final witness against the Israelites, proving to them that they were indeed *sanctified*—set apart—by the blood of Jesus Christ, and protected by it *regardless* of where they were. What an awesome miracle! I hope that helps you to make up your mind, to solidify your faith regarding this. This is only one tiny part of it. The whole rest of the doctrine is the same way. It is just as plain as day. Passover begins as the 13th ends and the 14th begins. Twenty-four hours later we celebrate the going out on the first day of Unleavened Bread.

I want you to shift gears quickly to the Wave Sheaf Offering, beginning the count to Pentecost. This year that would have been made on Sunday, just before the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. There is nothing difficult about this one either if one believes what God says or does not say. We do not want to add to or take away.

I do have to admit that this one is a little bit more complex, but it is not difficult.

Leviticus 23:10-13 Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, *When you be come into the land* which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of *your* harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer that day when you wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meal offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour; and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.

All I really want you to note in these four verses is that the wave sheaf offering was not just a matter of waving a sheaf of grain before God. The ceremony also included burnt offering, a meal offering, and a drink offering accompanying the firstfruit grain offering.

Joshua 5 is the keystone of an alternate explanation of when Pentecost is to be observed during years when Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath, because that alternate explanation *demand*s

that a wave sheaf offering was made in Joshua 5, and if it was not, that whole alternate explanation falls apart. Well, I am going to show you that wave sheaf offering never took place.

Joshua 5:7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised because they had not circumcised them by the way [that is, in the wilderness].

Joshua 5:10-12 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

There are three things I want you to note here.

Point # 1: The mention of circumcision. The very fact that they had to circumcise shows that it had not been done during the wilderness years—40 years. In other words, it was not all that unusual for fairly long gaps of time that the ceremonial aspects of the law, even under Moses, were not done. Even Moses did not do it.

Point # 2: Passover is mentioned, but there is absolutely *no* mention of a wave sheaf offering. The wave sheaf offering is just as much a part of the ceremonial law as any other part, and it is intimately associated with the Days of Unleavened Bread, as is Passover. Passover is mentioned. The wave sheaf offering is not. In addition to that there is absolutely *no other offerings* mentioned either. Zilch. None. Not only no wave sheaf offering, no burnt offering, no meal offering, no drink offering. Nothing. There is not even a thank offering that they were in the land. All that is mentioned is that Passover was kept.

Now there is a very clear reason that no offerings were mentioned, which we are going to get at in just a moment or two. Brethren, it is entirely an *assumption* that a wave sheaf offering was made. An assumption. Nobody knows exactly what year Israel came into the land, and so no calendar can be checked on to see what day Passover fell, and therefore the Sunday the wave sheaf offering would have been made is also obscured.

Point # 3: Verse 12 shows Israel had no harvest of their own to bring in from *their* fields. They ate what the Canaanites sowed.

These three points are not something to gloss over. They are very important points. I heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong say several times that false teaching always begins with an assumption that is believed and then built upon with an elaborate superstructure.

We will take a brief look at Israel's leader Joshua.

Joshua 1:1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it

came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

Here is what God said to Joshua, just like God spoke to Moses.

Joshua 1:5-9 There shall not any man be able to stand before you all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall you divide for an inheritance the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper whithersoever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for the LORD your God is with you whithersoever you go.

There are Joshua's marching orders delivered by God Himself! "Do not turn to the left hand or to the right hand. Follow My law explicitly." That is very clear.

Let us next notice the regard in which the people held Joshua. The first is a response from Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in chapter 1, verse 12.

Joshua 1:12-18 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God has given you rest, and has given you this land. Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan: but you shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them: Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he has given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God gives them: then you shall return unto the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that you command us we will do, and whithersoever you send us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto you: only the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that does rebel against your commandment, and will not hearken unto your words in all that you command him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

Were they behind him, or what? They certainly were.

Joshua 3:7 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

In chapter 4, verse 8 we find Israel receiving their marching orders.

Joshua 4:8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

Joshua 4:14 On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they *feared* him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

The word "magnified" in verse 14 means "made him great in their eyes." The word "fear" there would be better translated "*reverenced* him." There was almost a worship of Joshua.

Joshua 23:1-3 And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age: And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that has fought for you.

All of this is taking place at the end of Joshua's life, and he is advising them.

Joshua 24:14-16 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river, and in Egypt; and serve you the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods.

It is very clear from the book of Joshua that this man served God all the days of his life with all of his heart. There is only one tiny mark against him, and that was when he failed to take counsel with God and instead accepted the counsel of his elders around him. He accepted their counsel, and it was not good. He should have sought God in that. This was the matter with the Gibeonites.

I will tell you, Joshua was one godly man. Now do you think that he would turn aside? I do not think so. This begins to become very important.

Now in Deuteronomy 12, we are going to begin to see why no offering was made, save Passover kept there in Joshua 5. The book of Deuteronomy was written before they went into the land. Actually in the last month of Moses' life.

Deuteronomy 12:1-4 These are the statutes and judgments which you shall observe to do *in the land* which the LORD God of your fathers gives you to possess it, all the days that you live upon the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which you shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And you shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. You shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

I did not read all of that, but you can fill in the details. Here are Israel's orders once they came into the land. When they were under Joshua, were they in the land? Yes they were! These instructions were to be observed once they came into the land.

Deuteronomy 12:4-5 You shall not do so unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall you seek and thither you shall come.

What is He talking about here? God is talking about a central place of worship for all of Israel. They were not allowed to make offerings any old place they wanted to, regardless of the occasion, no matter how important they might have thought it. They were not free to make offerings.

Deuteronomy 12:6-8 And *there* you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And *there* you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand unto, you and your households, wherein the LORD your God has blessed your. You shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man

whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

Do you see what God was doing? He was organizing a national religion that had one headquarters, and it was *there* the offerings had to be made.

Deuteronomy 12:9-11 For you are not as yet come to the *rest* [that is, the promised land] and to the inheritance which the LORD your God gives you. But when you go over Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you *rest* from *all* your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety; *Then* there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there;

God is talking about the building of His house wherein He dwelt—the tabernacle. When the tabernacle was erected, then God inhabited it, and then they would bring the offerings to Him *there*, not out in some field right inside the border. They had to wait until God designated a place through the leader (probably Joshua) as to where that place was going to be.

Deuteronomy 12:12-14 And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates, forasmuch as he has no part nor inheritance with you. Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place that you see. [That is so clear, brethren.] But in the place which the LORD shall choose in *one* of your tribes, *there* you shall offer your burnt offerings, and *there* you shall do all that I command you.

Once they were in the land they were forbidden to make the normal ceremonial offerings listed in Numbers 28 and Numbers 29 until the *whole land* had rest. Even then the regular sacrifices were limited to where the tabernacle was placed, and that would not occur until the land had rest. The length of time seems to be about seven years *after* Joshua 5.

The location eventually became the village of Shiloh in the territory of Ephraim. The tabernacle was not erected until Joshua the 18th chapter. I will read it to you.

Joshua 18:1 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.

Do not let that last phrase "And the land was subdued before them" fool you, because not all of the tribes had rest.

Joshua 18:2-3 And there remained among the children of Israel seven

tribes which had not yet received their inheritance. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are you slack to go to possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?

Seven tribes did not yet have their possession. Seven years after they came into the land these tribes still did not have their possession.

Joshua 21:43-45 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.

It was not until Joshua 21, verses 43 on to 45 in which they had rest from all their enemies round about.

Now do you honestly think that a man of Joshua's reputation would ignore such significant warnings from God Himself not to turn away from one iota of His law? "Do not turn to the right, do not turn to the left. You keep it explicitly just the way that Moses gave it to you." I do not think so. He would not permit them to make an offering in Joshua 5.

According to Deuteronomy 12, Israel was in no position to make a wave sheaf offering in Joshua 5 because there was no officially sanctified altar on which to make the offering. Why then could they meet the requirement to keep Passover? The reason is that it did not require an altar.

Passover was a national offering just like the others were, but it was a *home-based family-observed requirement*, exactly as God commanded it. The home-based thing was done in order to enforce personal individual responsibility in keeping the covenant with the God who passed over them, preserving not just their lives, but giving them political liberty as a bonus.

All other normal ceremonial offerings were done on a national basis; that is, they were performed at one place, at one time, in behalf of the entire nation. Those sacrifices were brought to God's symbolical home (the tabernacle in this case, and later on the Temple), presented before and burned on His personal altar. Then the fire consumed them, and it was just like He was eating them, and they disappeared.

To say that the sheaf was waved in Joshua 5 is *adding* to what the scripture says. Joshua 5 cannot be used a proof for their way of counting Pentecost. If it cannot be used, their whole explanation falls apart, and their conclusion regarding keeping the wave sheaf offering within the Days of Unleavened Bread is invalid.

But there is even more proof, brethren.

Exodus 23:14-16 Three times you shall keep a feast unto me in the year. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, in the time appointed of the month Abib, for in it you came out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty: And the feast of harvest [Pentecost], the firstfruits of your labours which you have sown in the field.

I do not want to go further because I want you to note what it says there. Verse 16 specifically applies to the *firstfruits* offering. Now, is it not true that the wave sheaf offering is the *first* of the firstfruits offering, so this instruction that is given here in verse 16 applies *directly* to it. You could not get something more positive.

What does it say here? It says that the offering must be made from the firstfruits of *their* labors that the Israelites had sown in *their* field. See—"which you have sown." Is there anything hard to understand about that phrase? The wave sheaf offering had to be made from the harvest from the seeds that they had sown in the field.

Could the Israelites even remotely begin to meet that requirement for the grain offerings when they had just been in the land in Joshua 5 a few days prior to being circumcised and keeping the Passover? If they did, brethren, that was the fastest sowing, maturing of the crop, reaping of the harvest in the history of human life on earth. Are we going to think that Joshua was that dull and unspiritual that he would just overlook the requirement, saying "Well, it just does not matter this time." Israel ate the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

One Church of God minister said that when Israel entered the land, the produce of the land that God gave them was theirs; therefore they were free to offer it to God. Now that response is only partially correct. It was indeed theirs to eat, but they were still not permitted to offer that produce to God as an offering because they had not sown it. Now do we just ignore or not believe what God says in that requirement? Do you believe what God says here?

The offering had to be from seed *Israelites* had sown in the field. Joshua had none. Zilch. Nada. As the land became free as it was being given rest through Israel's armies' conquest, the Israelite farmers began sowing right behind the army; thus they began to prepare for the next year.

Now who does the first of the firstfruits symbolically represent? Certainly it represents Jesus Christ—I Corinthians 15, verses 20 and 23.

I Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

I Corinthians 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Jesus is the first of the firstfruits, and we too, brethren, are firstfruits, but He is the *first* of the firstfruits, just like the wave sheaf is the first of the firstfruits. The rest of the harvest of the

firstfruits will occur, according to our understanding of the prophecy, some 2,000 years *after* the first of the firstfruit is cut from the earth and waved before God. The symbol—the grain offering—must match the spiritual reality.

Did Jesus come out of the Gentiles? Jesus was an Israelite of the tribe of Judah, and so it was Israel's field out of which He was born, brought to maturity as a sinless offering, and then harvested from the earth by means of a resurrection to spirit life. This is the spiritual reason the offering had to be from seed that the Israelites had sown. Joshua had no Israeli-sown produce to offer, because Israel had not been sowing in the wilderness, and that was not their land anyway. The wilderness did not exemplify their land, and besides that, they had been in the land of promise only a few days.

There is even more proof that Israel did not offer that wave sheaf offering.

Malachi 1:6-14 A son honours his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is my honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Says the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And you say, Wherein have we despised your name? You offer polluted bread upon my altar; and you say, Wherein have we polluted you? In that you say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto your governor; will he be pleased with you, or accept your person? Says the LORD of hosts. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this has been by your means: will he regard your persons? Says the LORD of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? Neither do you kindle fire on my altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, says the LORD of hosts. But you have profaned it, in that you say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. You said also, Behold, what a weariness is it? And you have snuffed at it, says the LORD of hosts: and you brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus you brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? Says the LORD. But cursed be the deceiver, which has in his flock a male, and vows, and sacrifices unto the LORD a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

These verses very clearly spell out that God is not at all pleased when His people defile the very special relationship He has established with them by means of careless, corrupted, polluted,

defective, unacceptable offerings that do not meet His standards. Again I ask you. Do you honestly think that Joshua would ignore those instructions?

Leviticus 22:18-25 Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering: You shall offer at your own will a male without blemish of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever has a blemish, that shall you not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offers a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, you shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD. Either a bullock or a lamb that has anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that may you offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted. You shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall you make any offering thereof in your land. Neither from a stranger's hand shall you offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their [the stranger's] corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you.

Regardless of the condition of the offering itself, if it came from a Gentile—a stranger—it was not acceptable because of the source of the offering. Is that clear, or what?

You might have a little bit of difficulty between verse 18 where strangers are mentioned, and verse 25 where they are mentioned again. There is a difference between the two. The strangers in verse 18 are those who are travelling *with* Israel, living *with* Israel, and have become, as we would say today, *converted* and have been circumcised, making the covenant with God. Then there was one law. It did not matter whether the person was a Gentile or an Israelite. But if the person was unconverted, if he was a stranger, he had not made the covenant, his offering was unacceptable. That is the one in verse 25.

So no offerings were made in Joshua 5. The only grain that Joshua had available to him was corrupted by the stranger's hand. It was not acceptable to God. Again this shows that Joshua had no alternative. He could not make the offering the Worldwide Church of God concluded that he did. Without that offering, their explanation of Joshua 5 is useless. There is no authority there.

One final point. I have heard people say that the wave sheaf offering must fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread or it is not acceptable. I have a question. Where does it say that in the scripture? It does not say that anywhere, and that is just the point. It is adding to the scriptures.

When they say, "Well, it is inferred by the fact that Jesus was waved on a Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread following His resurrection, and therefore every wave sheaf has to be

offered on a Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread."

This explanation is only partly correct. It is not well thought out at all. He indeed was waved then, but it does not follow that every wave sheaf offering must be waved within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Why is this?

Now follow this. Does every Passover have to fall on a Wednesday because that is the day on which Jesus was crucified? Does every First Day of Unleavened Bread have to fall on a Thursday, and every Last Day of Unleavened Bread fall on a Wednesday because those were the days' alignment in the year when Jesus was crucified? Absolutely not! No one requires that. Besides, there is no such command giving us permission to do this.

Brethren, we are dealing here with a calendar operation which will push the wave sheaf offering outside the Days of Unleavened Bread about once every nine or ten years on average. There is no indication in the Bible that this is illegal. There is no indication, brethren, that there was any waving of the sheaf in Joshua 5, and therefore it cannot be used as a determining factor for deciding when to wave the sheaf. To do so breaks the clearly given procedure of always counting Pentecost by the same procedure.

Counting begins with the day following the weekly Sabbath that falls between the two holy days in the Days of Unleavened Bread. In those years when Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath, that weekly Sabbath will also always be the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. And then the wave sheaf is offered the next day.

I want you to remember the theme of this chapter in Deuteronomy: strict regulations about making offerings to God, where and when.

Deuteronomy 12:32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: you shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

That is the sermon for today. I hope you have a very good day remaining.