

The First Day of Unleavened Bread (Part 2)

The Importance of the First Day of Unleavened Bread

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 30-Apr-05; Tape #717B

The theme of my sermon on the first day of Unleavened Bread was to show us that Passover and the first day of Unleavened Bread are related. They are adjacent to one another on the calendar. They bang right up against one another but at the same time they are separate festivals. Each one of them is significant enough on its own merit to be observed separately according to its meaning and to God's purpose, and therefore to our lives.

Last week I showed through the ebb and flow in verses of the first five books of the Bible primarily, especially Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, that the events of each day during the first keeping of them by Israel *clearly* is different, and that their starting points were twenty-four hours apart. Each has its own separate set of instructions as to what the Israelites had to accomplish, and therefore there is separate different spiritual instruction and application that applies to us. They are very much not to be confused by blending them together into one festival.

I am going to continue this theme in today's message even though it is the last day of Unleavened Bread. We are still going to be focused on the significance of the *first* day of Unleavened Bread; however today's message provides a direct link to the events of Joshua 5 and Israel's coming into the land.

The man who wrote the paper that motivated my previous sermon gives his readers the impression that he is giving people something new, something special that God gave to him. However, brethren, what he is giving is not in the least new. I have seen other papers attempting to do the same thing in the past, and even the Jews mangle the same basic scriptures to some degree. The Jews have pushed the 14th and the 15th together, but emphasize the 15th, but still retaining the eight days of the two festivals at the same time. This other man, though, puts the same days together, emphasizing the 14th, but shortening the entire period to seven days.

Let us go to Exodus 12. We are going to do a bit of review and at the same time introduce some new thoughts as well.

Exodus 12:40-42 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. 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.

Some of the problem of confusing these two festivals arises because of people attempting to put these verses that we just read into the events of Passover rather than in the first day of Unleavened Bread where they rightly belong.

Some critics have chidingly called the Night To Be Much Observed "Armstrong's folly." However, its observation is biblically correct, and it is a *very* significant part of the Days of Unleavened Bread. It rightly should be observed so that we are reminded of its importance to us.

As the Worldwide Church of God crashed, some of its leaders began teaching the Jewish version, but when they were done they had dropped the observation of all of God's festivals. Below is an excerpt of a Worldwide Church of God paper advocating the 14th-15th Passover of the *Jewish* variety. I am not exactly sure when this was written.

It is a night of watching, or vigil, for God and Israel. In that night Israel had to eat the lamb in that manner. 'And this shall you eat; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste [Exodus 12: 14]. This manner of eating the Passover meal fits more the description of the night of watching and seems to prepare Israel for the next experiences they were going to be encountered with, mainly spoiling the Egyptians and being thrust or forced out of Egypt. If they did not eat the lamb in haste, and did not keep a night of watching, or vigil, they would not have been ready to spoil their neighbors in a moment's notice, since the Egyptians had thrust them out of Egypt for fear they would be all dead. The fact that Israel was ready, that is, dressed and packed, made it possible for them to be thrust in haste out of Egypt with everything they had on. And another point to remember, that after the Death Angel passed through at midnight, it says, 'And Pharaoh rose up in the night, and all of his servants, and all of the Egyptians.' Israel did not rise up because they were watching and keeping vigil, as it was a night of vigil unto them.

The writer of this clearly puts the eating of Passover and the night of watching as being part of the same night. Verse 43 might tend to make one think that indeed Passover night was in the context because the instructions there are clearly for Passover. Let us look at verse 43, thinking about what is in verses 40 through 42.

Exodus 12: 43 And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof.

That would tend to make a person think of Passover, would it not? The word "Passover" is even mentioned there, and in the previous verses it is talking about "going out." But the Bible is not written like other books that we are familiar with. You might remember Herbert Armstrong many times stating that the Bible is like a picture puzzle, that many pieces or parts of it may look alike, but only one piece will fit perfectly right where it belongs.

To the best of my knowledge, when the Bible was originally written, there was no punctuation. There were no paragraph breaks. These are later literary devices, and again my research has shown that these did not appear until about somewhere around the Thirteenth Century AD—long after the Old and New Testaments were completed. Modern translators have inserted the paragraph breaks into the Bible. I am not inferring that they have done a bad job. I think that overall they have done an overwhelmingly good job, but sometimes they made a mistake, and we can be misled.

The Bible that I am using right now has a paragraph break between verses 42 and 43, clearly indicating (in the minds of the translators anyway) a change of subject. The previous paragraph break begins in verse 37.

Exodus 12:37-39 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. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.

I think that you can see very clearly, especially when you join verses 40 and 42 to the subject that is introduced in verse 37, that from verse 37 until the end of verse 42, the subject is the first day of Unleavened Bread. It is the Night To Be Much Observed. It is the 15th that is the subject.

Verse 43 has been separated correctly. A new subject has begun at the paragraph break, because now the subject goes back to Passover. Now that subject of the Passover continues to the end of verse 50. Verse 51 is placed wrong. What we see in our Bible as chapter 13 actually begins in verse 51. The paragraph should break right there after verse 50. Let us read it and you will see.

Exodus 12:51 And it came to pass the selfsame day that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.
[Exodus 13:1-3] And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt?

So the paragraph break should begin at verse 51 because the subject changes there from Passover and it goes back to the first day of Unleavened Bread. I will give you one additional clue.

Exodus 12:40-41 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame

day,?

Exodus 12:51 And it came to pass the selfsame day,?

The subject, beginning in verse 51, is the same as the subject that began in verse 37 and carries through to the end of verse 42. The subject in verses 37-42 and 51 all the way through chapter 13 is the day that we know of as "the first day of Unleavened Bread." The subject in that paragraph is "The Night To Be Much Observed," and what followed.

We are going to review three verses from the last sermon because they are essential to understanding. We have to get the time elements down here. This is like breaking a mystery.

Exodus 12:22 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.

That is clearly instruction for the 14th—Passover. They were not to leave their houses until the morning. If you were back there then, the time that this applies to would be somewhere in the dark of the 14th; that is, at the very beginning of the day.

Numbers 33:3 And they departed from Rameses in the first month on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the morrow [or the day] after the Passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.

That is as clear as you can get. They went out on the 15th. Passover is the 14th.

Deuteronomy 16:1 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord your God: for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night.

You put them all together and the sum and substance of it is that Passover is on the 14th. They left Egypt on the 15th at night, and since Israelite days began at night, they left Egypt at the *beginning* of the 15th—24 hours after the events of the Passover began. It was 24 hours from the time that the 14th began until they actually left Egypt at night.

Here is a simple statement: It is absolutely impossible for one to stay in one's home on the night of the 14th (which, remember, would be at the beginning of the day) and still leave Egypt at night on the 15th. It is absolutely impossible! You cannot jam these two days together into one. We are dealing with two different festivals, significant for two different reasons, and each began 24 hours apart.

1. Passover and the killing of the lamb, focuses on *our* responsibility for the death of the Savior, thus making it possible for a relationship with God.

2. Eating the lamb emphasizes the equally important sustenance and strength for sustaining the relationship. The "going out" on the 15th emphasizes the action required to continue the growth of the relationship.

These are distinct operations in each day. The 14th (Passover) and the 15th (the first day of Unleavened Bread) though have a much longer history than the events that occurred in Exodus 12-14 because the Bible records another significant event in the history of Israel and the church that occurred on the same days.

We are going to go back to Exodus 12 again. I want you to pay attention to the 430 years that are mentioned in verse 40. That 430 years is so important to God's instruction that He repeats it in the very next verse, and He adds a third thing to drive it home to us. He says, *the selfsame day.* "It was not just 430 years, but the Exodus from Egypt happened 430 years *right t right to the same 24-hour period* of something that occurred 430 years before—something very, very significant to our salvation.

We are going to start stringing this together. It is something that you may have had before, but the review will do you good. I think that every time I give this, I give it a little bit more clearly, putting everything in line a little bit better.

We are going to go to Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:15-17 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to your seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

What I want you to pick out of that is this: First of all, the subject is a covenant, but it is a covenant that God made through Jesus Christ with Abraham. Paul also mentions a law that was added 430 years after that covenant was made. The covenant in question here is not the one that we call the Old Covenant. Rather, Paul writes of the covenant God made with Abraham 430 years before the covenant God made with Israel.

The covenant that God made with Abraham had promises, including the giving to him of many descendants. This was made by God, but there were no specific laws stated as being attached to that covenant. This does not mean though that Abraham did not have to obey laws. We are going to go to Genesis 26, because rather than just slide by this; I want you to see that though no law was mentioned, that did not stop Abraham from obeying laws. He went full bore because he understood.

In Genesis 26:1 God is speaking to Isaac, and He repeats briefly the promise that He made with Abraham, and He is passing that same promise on to Isaac.

Genesis 26:4-5 And I will make your seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto your seed all these countries: and *in your seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed *because* that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.

We can understand from these verses that even though no laws were specifically mentioned, Abraham understood that his part of the covenant was to obey God. This is how He expressed it, and Abraham did it. That is important. He did it.

Let us go now to Genesis 15: 1-4.

Genesis 15:1-4 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed: and lo, one born in my house is my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him saying, This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir.

This is the beginning of the covenant God made with Abraham and that Paul wrote of in Galatians 3. The entire chapter of Genesis 15 is of a special covenant containing promises that God made with Abraham to provide him with an heir and descendants from his own house, and inheritance of the land.

Genesis 15:13-16 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

One of the interesting things, at least to me anyway, is to note God's foresight in all of this. Remember, this was before Abraham had any heir at all. We are talking about when he was somewhere shortly after the age of 75 and before Isaac was born. That is a long time before the children of Israel came out of Egypt. God's foresight included some form of discipline for Abraham's descendants that was going to last for 400 years—before the beginning of fulfillment of at least part of what God had in mind here.

You will notice a difference between the 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12 and the 430 years mentioned in Galatians 3, and the 400 years that is mentioned here. Now nobody—and I mean

nobody—has been able to know exactly what event began the 400 years, because nobody has zeroed in on an event and it is not written in the Bible, as far as we know.

Researchers have come to the conclusion that the 400 years is simply intended to be an approximation of the 430 years. They back this up with the mention of the four generations in verse 16. Those generations appear to be Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses. Since those people lived a great deal longer than we do, the researchers say that God assigned roughly approximately 100 years to each generation. By this, Abraham, in faith, would understand that at some time in that fourth generation would come the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy that God made.

We need to understand so we get a bigger grasp on things here because this covenant is awesome. We need to understand that God is inaugurating a much, much larger plan, beginning with Abraham and then continuing through Isaac, who was a type of the Promised Seed, then Jacob and his twelve children (thirteen counting Dinah), Joseph and going down into Egypt, the famine that began while Joseph was there forcing Jacob to go down into Egypt where Israel grew into millions of people, and out of that millions of people God raised up Moses through whom would come the freeing of Israel from their captivity.

Brethren, that was just the first step of the fulfillment of the promises that are contained in this covenant God made with Abraham.

Let us tie this together with Exodus 12: 40, 42. The term "selfsame day" that appears in Exodus 12: 41 is used biblically in three ways: First, to indicate an act or event that took place *immediate* *immediately*, with no time lapse. Something occurred, and God would say "the selfsame day," meaning the next thing occurred right away. The second way it is used in the Bible is the beginning of some practice that we should pay special attention to. In other words, God uses it to draw attention to something significant. The third way (and this is the most important one) is a combination of marking the anniversary of an earlier event, and at the same time drawing attention to that event's significance. That is the way it is used in Exodus 12: 40-41.

The events of Genesis 15 are a very significant starting point. The events of Exodus 12 and 13 carry those events to its first major, major fulfillment. I said "major, major," because when Isaac was born, that was *the first step* in the fulfillment of these promises.

The events of Genesis 12 and 13 are the next major step in the fulfillment of this covenant that God is making with Abraham in Genesis 15. What is happening here is that God is, with Abraham and this covenant, formally beginning His spiritual purpose. However, that will be preceded by forming Abraham's physical descendants into a physical nation which God will use for His purposes, and from whom God will draw the bulk of those who are going to be in the first resurrection. We can see it is beginning to step out and include us.

Now we are going to look at Genesis 17.

Genesis 17:18-27 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before you! And God said, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed; and you shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after

him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto you at this set time in the next year. And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. And Abraham took Ishmael his son and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin *in the selfsame day*, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In *the selfsame day* was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son, and all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

What God did here was add circumcision as a requirement and as the sign that those bearing this mark had made the covenant at the same time with Abraham. (I believe that this term "selfsame day" appears something like fourteen times in the Bible.)

We are going to go now to Exodus 19:1. You know the background here. Israel is now out of Egypt and they have gone to Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:1 In the third month when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

Here we have the same basic language. God is telling us that this occurred three months to *the very day* after leaving Egypt. God is giving us another marker here. It may not be important to this subject, but it is important to some subject that we will eventually study into. It is giving us a time marker.

We are going to go now to the New Testament to the book of Acts. Here we are peeking in on the sermon that Stephen preached before the people that day. We are going to hop, skip, and jump to a number of verses.

Acts 7:1-2 Then said the high priest, Are these things so? And he [Stephen] said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Haran. [and He told Abraham to get out of there.]

Acts 7:5-8 And He gave him [Abraham] none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spoke on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a

strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. [Stephen is quoting Genesis 15 exactly.] And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth and serve Me in this place. And He gave him the covenant of circumcision, and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

Acts 7:17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.

Stephen is drawing attention to the same circumstances and prophecies that were made in Genesis 15 as he tells of Israel coming out of Egypt.

Let us put what we have to this point in its proper order. Just a broad overview.

The real beginnings of the Old Testament Church was not at Sinai, but in the land of inheritance where Abraham pitched his tent. Eventually what Stephen gets around to is the New Testament Church, but on his way there he has to establish what he calls "the congregation in the wilderness." So where does the establishment of "the Church in the wilderness" begin? He goes back to Abraham, *not* to Mount Sinai. That is the foundation. The foundation of God's spiritual purpose is the covenant with Abraham, not what happened at Sinai or anytime after that. The real formal beginning (if we can put it that way) was that seemingly simple ceremony we see in Genesis 15.

From that small beginning with Abraham and Sarah, came Isaac and Rebecca, then Jacob, his wives, concubines, thirteen children, the selling of Joseph into Egypt, and the famine that forced Jacob into Egypt where they grew into a sizeable measure. Then came the raising up of Moses, the destruction of Egypt culminating in the slaying of the firstborn on the night of the 14th of Abib as Israel was eating and burning the Passover lamb. At daybreak they finished cleaning and packing up and then proceeded on from Goshen to Rameses. As night fell on the 15th and the 15th began, came the climax to that point in time. The children of Israel left their bondage behind and became a free people and an independent nation 430 years to the *very day* that God entered into the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15.

The Old Covenant was made at Mount Sinai, and it was essentially the *same* covenant as entered into by God with Abraham, but it was expanded in order to serve and include an entire nation—all the descendants of Abraham—and had added laws necessary for the administering to that entire nation. Now that all by itself makes Abib 15 a very significant date.

Let me read again Numbers 33: 3.

Numbers 33:3 And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteen day of the first month, on the day *after* the Passover. On the morrow after the Passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.

The children of Israel went out of Egypt on the day *after* Passover. Not *on* Passover, not Passover night, but on the day *after* Passover. I hope if we do not get anything else out of this, we will get *that* out of this!

Turn now to Exodus the 12.

Exodus 12:41-42 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. 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.

I am going to read those verses from a couple of modern translations.

Exodus 12:41-42 [The Revised English Bible] The Israelites had been settled in Egypt for 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all of the tribes of the Lord came out of Egypt. This was the night when the Lord kept vigil to bring them out of Egypt. It is the Lord's night, a vigil for all Israelite generation after generation.

Now the way that is stated, if we are Israelites, we are to keep it.

Exodus 12:41-42 [The New International Version] Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, to the very day, all of the Lord's divisions left Egypt. Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all of the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the Lord for generations to come.

Exodus 12:41-42 [Moffatt Translation] It was a night when the Eternal was on the watch to bring them out of Egypt, a night when all Israelites *must* watch for the Eternal age after age.

Our responsibility is beginning to shape up.

You might have noticed that in these three selections, the word "observed," as it appears in the King James Version, was changed to "vigil" or "watching." This is because those English words are actually closer in meaning to the Hebrew word used there in Exodus 12.

You probably also noticed that those translations showed it is *God* who was on the watch, and the Israelites are to commemorate, or to remember especially that aspect of their leaving Egypt as a special characteristic of their coming out and future observation of that day.

Now what is God doing here? He is charging us to be especially attentive of something.

I am going to read some definitions of the English word "watch" from the *Merriman Webster Online Dictionary*.

1. Watch: to keep vigil as a devotional exercise.

This is not something that is done anymore, but much of Protestantism used to have days set aside in which the people were to "watch." I do not know what they were watching, but it was a watch night. They probably picked it up from this. I do not know whether they did it on this night. They probably did not. But the word "watch" means, "to keep vigil as a devotional exercise."

2. Watch: to be awake during the night.
3. Watch: to be attentive to; to keep guard.
4. Watch: to keep someone or something under close observation.
5. Watch: to be expectant.

There are three things that I believe He wants us to be especially attentive to during the first day of Unleavened Bread.

1. To be attentive of the fact that the day commemorates liberty from bondage.
2. That it occurred on exactly the anniversary of God making the covenant with Abraham. There is something of special importance to that covenant.
3. That God is watching to ensure safety and provision for His people.

The Night To Be Much Observed is at least partly a night of watching—a night of watchful vigil—of careful attention to the actual events and its symbolism in order to properly commemorate the liberty that it portends. As far as liberty is concerned, brethren, we have not seen anything yet! It is because *God* is watching over, that liberty occurs at all and produces what this day portend