

## Rejoicing or Solemnity?

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I want to ask you a question, brethren, right at the beginning. The Night to be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread... Are they times for rejoicing?

I believe that the answer to this question is "Yes"... and... "No"!

Exodus 12:41-42 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day [it was night actually]—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of *solemn* observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a *solemn* observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

Notice that the words "to be much observed" in the King James Version appear in the New King James Version as "solemn observance"

In the sermon this afternoon, I would like to examine the seemingly opposite concepts of rejoicing and solemnity on the Night to be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

These words translated in the New King James Version as "solemn observance," and in the Rotherham translation as "solemn observances" come from the single Hebrew word, *shimmur*, which means, simply: observed, an observance, night watch, watching, or vigil.

But let us dig a little deeper!

This Hebrew word *shimmur* is derived from the root verb *shamar* which can mean: observe, watch for, regard, take heed, take note, look narrowly, pay attention.

These aspects of the word *shamar* are the "looking and watching" aspects, and among other aspects as well. They are: to wait for, to retain, to celebrate, to perform a vow, to reserve, to maintain, to remain, to keep or to be a keeper.

The main stronghold of a castle is called a "keep." A keeper is an old word for a jailer or prison guard and this leads to the protective aspect of the word *shamar*. There are many words in here: guard, guardsman, bodyguard, watchman, sentry, doorkeeper, gatekeeper, to keep watch, protect, be on one's guard, be guarded, preserve, protect, have charge of, defending, diligently keep, restrain, confine, hedge about (as with thorns), being careful, beware, treasure up, hoard, and finally circumspect.

When applied to the Night to be Much Observed, *shimmur* and *shamar* indicate two things: first of all that we should be solemnly protective of the Night To Be Much Observed observance. And

secondly that our great, all-powerful God protects and even restrains His people for our own good.

Let us look into the question, "Should we be solemn, or should we rejoice on this First Day of Unleavened Bread?"

On the Passover night we observe it with great solemnity on Abib 14 each year. We look at the following night and day, Abib 15, the Night to be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread as a night and day of great rejoicing.

And in *some* ways, they certainly should be; I do not wish to take away from that at all. I do not want to be a wet blanket or a spoil sport. But, as with so many other matters, we must beware of the influence of Satan and his cunning counterfeits.

Satan's Easter season is set as it is at this same time of year. Satan ingeniously intertwined it with God's Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread season. The Easter season is perhaps one of Satan's cleverest counterfeits.

For those of you who have spent some of our earlier lives in what we might call "the churches of the world," perhaps in the Roman Catholic Church or, as in my own case, in the protestant Church of England, let me ask a question: Do we still—in the back parts of consciousness—unwittingly harbor some vestiges or even preference for the doctrines we learned in our old religions? They are not ours, but Satan's religion, brethren.

For example, have we in some ways likened God's Passover Night to the world's Maundy Thursday? This is not such a very well known one, but that is what the Catholics and the Anglicans call the night that Jesus kept the Passover. Have we in some ways likened God's Passover day to Satan's Good Friday? Have we likened God's First Day of Unleavened Bread to Satan's Easter Sunday?

Let me ask you not turn things around by forgetting that God's holy days came first; Satan's counterfeits came much later! I would like to take a little time to examine this, because these and other remnants of the world's heathen and idolatrous religions, which again are Satan's religions, possess great potential to spiritually harm God's children. So let us refresh our memories by taking another look at the timing of Jesus' death and resurrection.

We know very well that Jesus' crucifixion was *not* on a Friday, and His resurrection was *not* on a Sunday morning, as Satan would have the world believe. We believe that Jesus died in the afternoon of Passover Day on Wednesday, Abib 14, in the year AD31.

Approximately 1,500 years before Jesus' crucifixion, after sunset on that same day, rather at the beginning of Abib 15—the evening we keep as the Night to be Much Observed—the Israelites began their journey out of Egypt "with a high hand."

Exodus 14:8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with a high hand [boldness, NKJV].

Numbers 33:3 They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the

fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand [boldness, NKJV] in the sight of all the Egyptians.

They went out "with a high hand." What does that mean? Does it mean that they were partying as they came out? The phrase "with a high hand" might be a pretty good translation for the Hebrew words *ruwm-yad*. It does not necessarily mean that the Israelites were whooping it up with rejoicing as they went. We just read in Exodus 14: 8 that Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, was pursuing after the children of Israel at that time. If the children of Israel had any inkling that this was happening, they would not be partying too much. They were not really in a party spirit.

Other more modern Bible translations render *ruwm-yad* as: in a mighty hand (i.e. the hand of God); with a mighty hand (i.e. the hand of God); with great power (i.e. the power of God); with an uplifted hand; triumphantly; boldly; with boldness; heads high and confident; without looking back

Perhaps we should be emulating the Israelites in these ways as we keep the Night To Be Much Observed and the First Day Of Unleavened Bread. In other words, rather than the emphasis being on just having a good time and rejoicing, place the emphasis on God and His great might.

Let us go forward in time again, to AD31 (approximately 1,500 years later), on the same night of the year that the Israelites began their exodus out of Egypt, safely nestled in the mighty hand of God. Where was Jesus Christ on that night? He was lying in His tomb—stone dead! Now that is solemn.

Even though Jesus had successfully completed the first step in God's plan of salvation, and God's first step in victory over death, Satan and sin, Jesus Christ was dead on that night and day. What did Jesus look like as He was lying there? His body, on that night, was not a pretty picture. It certainly was not as it is portrayed by so many of the Renaissance artists—a clean, marble-white body with a few tiny puncture holes in its hands, feet, side and forehead and a few dribbles of blood.

Because of the approaching sunset beginning the First Day of Unleavened Bread that year, His body could not be thoroughly washed and prepared for burial. We are told that Joseph and Nicodemus *hurriedly* wrapped Jesus' body in linen cloth with some spices and buried it *temporarily*, with the idea that the women would return later to complete the permanent preparations.

Luke 23:50-56 Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath

according to the commandment.

Luke 24:1 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

We believe that they prepared those spices on the Friday.

Brethren, we do not need to watch the "Passion of the Christ" movie to understand what Jesus' body looked like that night. We know that He had five large holes in His body from which His life blood had drained. One in each wrist, one in each foot, and one in His side. We often read the following scriptures before the Passover, but I would like to review them today. I just want to give you the grim picture of what Jesus' body looked like on this night. I want you to think about the concepts of rejoicing and solemnity on this day in light of what was happening at that time.

John 19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

This must be one of the greatest understatements of the Bible! (Of course it was not Pilate who actually flogged Jesus.) The skin, muscle and flesh had been flayed from Jesus' back and perhaps other parts of His body by the cruel and illegal strokes of the flagellum.

When the Jews were going to whip anybody—according to Deuteronomy 25: 2-3—they had a limit of 40 lashes that they could give a person. But the Romans had no such limit. We have sometimes thought that Jesus received 39 strokes—the same as Paul did—but we do not know that. It may well have been much more.

Isaiah 50:6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: [Jesus did this voluntarily] I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Think about this again, now. On that night, and on this day—the First Day of Unleavened Bread in 31AD—Jesus' face was raw and bleeding where His torturers had ripped out the hairs of His beard.

His body was probably covered in dirt and a stinking film of His own dried blood, gall, sweat, and possible even urine. Add to that the disgusting, possibly disease-laden spit of His torturers, and it almost completes the picture. I know that this is disgusting to think about, brethren, but this is what Jesus looked like at this time.

Mark 14:65 Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.

Luke 18:32 [Jesus is foreseeing this for Himself] "For He [referring to Himself] will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and

insulted and spit upon."

He had some fair-sized holes in His forehead and scalp—the result of the crown of thorns being cruelly jammed onto His head:

Matthew 27:29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Now I know this from personal experience. Everybody has many, many blood vessels in the scalp. Just the tiniest cut on the scalp will cause it to bleed profusely. So you can imagine the result of this crown of thorns.

Depending on the type of bush the thorns were cut from, it is possible that these head wounds were infected by poison, and they after a while would become puffed up and yellow with pus. Again, this is awful to think about.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote a moving piece of music, specifically focusing on the abuse to Jesus' head. I would like to read the words to that, it is very short, but I found it very eye-opening:

O sacred head, sore wounded, defiled and put to scorn.  
O head, covered with blood and wounds, full of pain and full of insults!  
O head, wreathed for mockery with a crown of thorns!  
O head, once splendidly adorned with highest honor and adornment,  
but now outrageously abused.

So, for any who could see it, this is how Jesus' body looked on the Night to be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

And what about the disciples? Were they rejoicing on the Night to be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread in 31AD? Were they rejoicing over the "saving death" of their Master? Not at all! We know very well what they were doing. We know at Gethsemane on the previous night, they all fled in fear from Jesus' captors:

Mark 14:50-52 And they *all* forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him. And he left the linen cloth, and *fled* from them naked.

Three times in that same night Peter denied even knowing Jesus. We know those scriptures so very well. And despite all that Jesus had told the disciples in advance, these four warnings of what would happen vanished from their memories.

All of them wondered what could have gone so terribly wrong! We see this in Luke 24. This is

the account of the two disciples meeting up Jesus—who we believe had disguised Himself and changed His appearance—on the road to Emmaus. It gives you an idea of their mindset; they did not know that Jesus was raised up.

Luke 24:17-21 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and *are sad?*" [They were not rejoicing; they were sad.] Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel"

So they had lost that hope. They were downcast and despondent. They had forgotten everything Jesus had repeatedly told them would happen and the reasons why. Here in Mark 10, Jesus explains exactly what is going to happen, including the good news:

Mark 10:34 [First the bad news:] And they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. [Then the good news:] And the third day He will rise again.

They saw all of the bad news, but forgot the good news. Jesus even told them in advance how they would grieve, how they would be sad and despondent.

John 16:6 "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. [Sorrow! Even when He talked about it...]

John 16:20-22 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy [Again, He foresaw their sorrow]. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

But, on the Night To Be Much Observed and on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, Jesus was not raised yet. So the disciples were still in deep sorrow, in anguish, in fear, and terrible doubt, because they forgot Jesus' promise of His resurrection. The disciples were actually in hiding because they feared; they feared arrest, themselves, for their association and friendship with Jesus. Where ever they were, they were quaking in fear, lest what the Jews and the Romans

had done to Jesus be repeated on each of them.

In John 20:19, we will see where they were

John 20:19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, [why] for fear of the Jews...

So, again, the question comes: Was the Night To Be Much Observed and the First Day Of Unleavened Bread a time for rejoicing? Certainly not in 31AD!

The morning after, still Abib 15, a Thursday in that year—the morning that we gather for the first Holy Day service of God's sacred year—Jesus was still in the same, awful condition. He was lying dead in His tomb.

The following day, Abib 16, a Friday that year, He was still dead in His grave.

Abib 17, a Sabbath that year, He was still dead in His grave... at least for most of the day.

Then, finally, we have a reason to rejoice! Shortly before sunset that late Sabbath afternoon—exactly 72 hours, three days and three nights—after His friends had laid Him in His tomb, He emerged from it. It is amazing to think about this, brethren.

Although the people came and they saw the stone rolled away, Jesus did not need someone to roll the stone away from the mouth of the cave so that He could leave it. That was probably done by angels for the benefit of the human visitors who came on the Sunday morning. But, Jesus Christ was once again alive. The Son of God was once again a great and powerful Spirit Being after being dead for three days and three nights.

Those thick rock walls of the tomb, seemingly so solid and impenetrable, were no barrier to Jesus Christ. To Him they were just a mass of whirling electrons, and He had the ability to just walk right through them!

Now, that Sabbath was the one that fell that year during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So, according to Leviticus 23:9-14, the following day was the annual Wave Sheaf Offering day. Now here, again, at last, was a day of rejoicing! *This* is the day that marks Christ's exit from His tomb, 72 hours after He was laid in it.

In 31 AD, these 72 hours fell just before sunset which closed the weekly Sabbath. We believe that on *that* sunset each year the wave sheaf was cut in the Old Testament times, and they took that raw sheaf of grain on the stalks and waved it for the first time that day, just after sunset as they came into the day. The sheaf was then threshed, winnowed into granular form, and poured into a bowl. The following morning (and the first day of the week that year), Abib 18, corresponded to the time Jesus paid a quick visit to His Father's heavenly throne. What happened then, in the temple, was that the bowl of grain was waved in the temple before God.

During the lunch break, I was listening to Handel's Messiah, and there is that wonderful aria from Psalm 68:18. I would just like to read that to you. "Thou are gone up on high, you have led captivity captive."

It must have been just a fabulous time of rejoicing for God the Father and Jesus Christ. There is so much symbolism in those steps, but I do not have time for it this afternoon. But, on this Wave Sheaf Day, either at the end of the Sabbath, or on the Sunday morning, we think that that could possibly be a more appropriate time for rejoicing because that day marked the end of Jesus' physical trial of debasement, torture and death. And it ended the Father's ordeal as well; you may not think of the Father going through an ordeal, but He was separated from His only Son.

Just what is my point in all this?

Brethren, I am not, of course, intimating that we should be celebrating Easter. Nor am I saying that we should turn the Wave Sheaf offering day into a feast day. Neither was ever commanded by God.

My main point is that the Night to be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread should be kept with a certain degree of solemnity. On this day in 31AD Jesus was still dead and in the tomb, God the Father was separated from His Beloved Son, and if you think about what was happening at the time, I can imagine Satan straining at the bit to strike the world at that time because one of the God family was sidelined for 72 hours.

I do not know if this is true, but we cannot know the vast restraints God may have imposed to restrain Satan and his demons during this pivotal and potentially dangerous 72 hour period when the fate of the world literally hung in the balance.

Another reason for the solemnity is that on that day we can think about the thousands of dead firstborn Egyptians who were symbolic of the dead firstborn Son of God. We think, as we do on Passover night, about the sinless Son of God who had been made sin and a curse for you and me. The final reason, here, is that although the first huge step was taken in the salvation process by Jesus, it was far from complete and I want to get into that some more.

The First Day of Unleavened bread is in many respects a transitory day—the fulfillment of it, the symbolism of it. The situation on the First Day of Unleavened Bread in 31AD could be described as precarious, at best. It was *not*, that year (as we have already seen), a time for rejoicing. The conditions that existed on that day could *not* remain. They *had* to be temporary, because eternity literally hung in the balance. Events were dangerously incomplete; and they *had* to move on!

Again, I do not want to be a wet blanket, or a spoiled sport. I do believe that a certain level of rejoicing is appropriate on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, because on this day God, in Old Testament times, opened the gates of physical Egypt. This was the second step towards freedom for physical Israel; of course the first step was the slaying of Egypt's firstborn on Passover.

In the New Testament, God opened the gates of spiritual Egypt and that is the second step towards our freedom from sin and death (for the spiritual Israel of God, the church). Again, the first step was the slaying of the firstborn Son of God on Passover afternoon.

But, although these events that took place on the Passover and First Day of Unleavened Bread were huge and historically pivotal events—I do not want to take away from that at all—they were still initial steps. And I hesitate to say 'only initial steps' because they *are* major events.

But, what I want to do for the rest of sermon is to show how rejoicing increases as the plan of salvation progresses towards its completion

The next step after the First Day of Unleavened Bread is the Wave Sheaf Offering day. We do not keep it as a feast day, but it actually goes one step further than the Night To Be Much Observed and the First Day of Unleavened Bread do. It goes on to Step three of the plan of salvation and, again, it pictures Jesus' exit from, and His initial victory over, death and the grave. I say *initial* victory over death and the grave.

Let us go to step four. Step four will be celebrated next week on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Abib 21. That day can picture the baptism of new Christians. It can picture the time when physical Israel completely escaped from physical Egypt and its Pharaoh after God miraculously brought them through the Red Sea. Also, the third symbolism for the Last Day of Unleavened Bread is that God just as miraculously—or even more so—enables spiritual Israel to escape from sin and Satan completely. I say completely, but even this step is an intermediate one. Yet, it is the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, but even that last step in these days is an intermediate one.

As the subsequent segments of God's sacred year and their fulfillments progress, the salvation process becomes more and more complete. And the appropriateness for great and unrestrained rejoicing actually increases.

Let us go through these other steps. I do not just want to talk about the Holy Days, but the days between the Holy Days too, because I think that they have some symbolism too.

Step five is the period (6-7 weeks) between the Last Day of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Pentecost. This might symbolize:

- The Israelites' journey from the Red Sea to Sinai, and
- The initial journey of each member New Testament church member from our initial calling to our impregnation with God's Holy Spirit and the receiving of God's law and love into our hearts.

The symbolism can break down and the timing can break down, but this is how I picture it in my mind.

Step six is the Feast of Pentecost:

- Memorializes God's gift of His law to His Old Testament children at Sinai,
- Symbolizes Him giving His Holy Spirit to His New Testament children.

In step seven, we see a long period of three and a half months between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets, and this long period might symbolize:

- The period of Israel's prolonged wandering in the wilderness from

Sinai towards the Promised Land beset by many troubles and imperfections.

- In the New Testament, as it applies to us, this three and a half months might symbolize our life long earthly journey stumbling towards the Kingdom of God. And, like the Old Testament Israelites, beset by many imperfections.

There is solemnity in this too, because we are not there yet. We would like to be there, but we are not. And because we are not, there is still that danger that we could fall away, and that we could leave the truth. So there is solemnity there.

Step eight is the Feast of Trumpets. Of course the Feast of Trumpets looks forward to Jesus Christ's return to earth and also to the First Resurrection—the resurrection of His brothers and sisters. It is a wonderful, pivotal time, and a time of rejoicing, because Jesus Christ is going to return, and the first resurrection is going to take place. But we remind ourselves every year that the Feast of Trumpets is also a time of wrath, war, death, and terrible destruction. Again, like the First Day of Unleavened Bread, it is a time of rejoicing mixed with a time of awesome solemnity:

Psalm 81:3 Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.

That could well specifically apply to the Feast of Trumpets.

Step nine is a short time period of eight days that stretches between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. The Feast of Trumpets on the first of the month, the Day of Atonement on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. I have asked myself sometimes why we do not go directly from the Feast of Trumpets to the Day of Atonement. Why do we have these extra days in between? Why do we have eight days separating the Feast of Trumpets on Tishri 1 from the Day of Atonement on Tishri 10? What does this period symbolize?

In the fulfillment of the holy days, what will happen during this eight-day period? Possibly, and again, I do not know about the timing of all of these things, it could be the solemn and terrifying Day of the Lord? If so, is the Day of the Lord a time for rejoicing? Let us see what Amos has to say about the Day of the Lord.

Amos 5:20 Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light?  
Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

That does not sound like too much of a reason to rejoice.

Somewhere around this time, the destruction of Babylon the Great will occur. God actually commands us to rejoice at this time.

Revelation 18:2 And he [this is an angel] cried mightily with a loud

voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

Revelation 18:20-21 *Rejoice* over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her! Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

Despite this great violence, God commands rejoicing at that time. However, in spite of this justified command to rejoice, the devastation that takes place must temper that terrible time with solemnity.

The Day of Atonement is step ten. I kind of smile at this one because there is a paradox here. This is on the first day that we really should feel free to rejoice totally; we probably do not feel much like rejoicing because we are fasting.

Leviticus 16:31 It is a Sabbath [speaking of the Day of Atonement] of *solemn* rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.

Leviticus 23:32 It shall be to you a Sabbath of *solemn* rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.

This day, of course, symbolizes the first imprisonment of Satan and his demon cohorts. Why would there be any solemnity in there?

I think that God, being a God of love, may look back and experience a pang and a degree of solemnity Himself, as He thinks back on the great potential that Satan had at one time back at the time when Satan had a different name. His name was not actually Lucifer but Heylel, which means brightness, light-bearer, shining one, and morning star. Does God think of what Satan could have been and how different things could have been if Heylel would have gone the right way?

But, the imprisonment of Satan is another reason for us to rejoice. Can you see the idea that I am getting at here? As God's sacred year progresses there is more and more reason to rejoice. Before this first imprisonment of Satan there is a time where all of the inhabitants of heaven rejoice when Satan and his demons are thrown out of that wonderful place and down to earth. This gives us an idea of the kind of rejoicing that there will be when Satan is put away.

Revelation 12:7-12 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the

Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength [you can see the rejoicing here], and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night [he will not be able to do that anymore]. Therefore rejoice [God commands] you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.

Again, we see rejoicing mixed with serious solemnity, because the event that brings rejoicing to heaven's inhabitants will bring woe to the earth's inhabitants at that time.

But, upon the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, the people of the earth, too, will be able to rejoice because Satan will be removed from them for a thousand years. We do not have a perfect situation, because we know that this relief period from Satan is for a limited time. There is a reason here for solemnity.

With Satan, 'out of sight' can not be 'out of mind.' We can think of Arnold Schwarzenegger who is famous for the line, "I'll be back!" Satan, too, will be back. So that is a reason for some solemnity

On to step eleven—there are four days that separate the Day of Atonement from the beginning of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. What events will fill the fulfillment of these four days?

I am sure that we will not be sitting around twiddling our thumbs or strumming on harps for these 96 hours. Perhaps this will be the time of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which will be the cause of more gladness and rejoicing:

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

As these last days go by—terrible times of the destruction and suppression of Babylon the Great, terrible times that lead to the imprisonment of Satan and his demons—the mix still is still that of rejoicing *and* solemnity. But it begins to be replaced with more and more unrestrained rejoicing. Most of the negatives are finished and there is mainly positives remaining. But still it is not perfect.

The Feast of Tabernacles is step twelve. We are nearly there.

Deuteronomy 16:13 (KJV) You shall observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that you have gathered in your corn and your wine And you shall rejoice in your feast, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within your

gates. Seven days shall you keep a solemn feast [there is still solemnity] unto the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all the works of your hands, therefore you shalt surely rejoice.

We know that the Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the wonderful thousand-year period which we call 'the Millennium.'

But, even the time of the Millennium is somewhat solemnized by the nagging knowledge that, at its close, Satan is to be freed from his prison. Despite the increased warnings to the people living under Christ's rule as the thousand years comes to a close, some will fall for Satan's final, desperate all-out deception. It is an awful thing to even consider.

But after that we can remember the phrase... "This too shall pass." After that is finished, Satan will be locked away forever and then comes the time for the greatest rejoicing, the highlight of the year, the highlight of eternity, the Last Great Day!

The Last Great Day is step thirteen. It symbolizes eternity beyond the Millennium. It is something that we cannot even get our little human minds around; the unification of God the Father, Jesus Christ and all of the children of God the Father and the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ in wonderful unity.

I Corinthians 15:24 Then comes the end, when He [Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

Although every one of the Holy Days is cause for rejoicing, only upon the fulfillment of the Last Great Day will all of the negatives be neutralized. Only then will sin, Satan, and death be gone forever.

So in the spring holy days—the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the first Day of Unleavened Bread and the Passover—God the Father and Jesus Christ began their victory against death. It is the very beginning of the plan. But the plan is only completed at the fulfillment of the Last Great Day:

I Corinthians 15:21, 54-55 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [Jump down to verse 54] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces [all solemnity will be removed]; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

So, in conclusion, rejoicing on this First Day of Unleavened Bread, because God freed us from our spiritual Pharaoh and spiritual Egypt, is good and right. But it should be tempered with a certain degree of an appropriate level of solemnity. Although the First Day of Unleavened Bread, the Spring Holy Days, the Night To Be Much Observed, are very, very important, they are one early, intermediate step in God's complete and great plan of salvation.