

Passover (Part 8)

Josiah, Hezekiah and Deuteronomy

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 09-May-92; Sermon #019

We are going to continue once again in the discussion regarding Passover. We are getting to some places here where the description is going to be a little bit more technical. I began with the things that were simpler, and we are working toward those things that are more difficult.

We are doing this on the belief that if we start with what is simple, then it is going to help in proving that the more difficult scriptures should be interpreted in a very definite way. You let the clear scriptures interpret the difficult ones. You do not let the vague interpret those which are clear. That ought to be a very simple principle, yet I believe that it has been forgotten by some, and as a result we find part of the church getting into very vague territory.

I am going to begin by giving a quotation from the book, *The Religions of the Ancient Near East*. This will be a description of a pagan festival to Baal that coincided exactly with the same seven days as the Feast of Unleavened Bread beginning on the fifteenth and ending on the twenty-second day of the first month.

The spring festivals reached their climax in sexual acts performed on the housetops where the participants felt they were nearest to the sun-god's power, and in the groves where it was believed Baal himself would join them in their worship. There were those who spawned their human seed upon the ground, sincerely trusting that this invoked a special heavenly blessing. At the temple feast, proxies for the invisible god and goddess gorged themselves, and in wanton dances called upon the bull god to appear. Women, intoxicated by concoctions of herbs and wine, lay naked upon the newly planted fields in adulation of Asherah. These were the occasions when the fathers gave their daughters to their own sons for harlotry, or took their own daughters to play the role of wife. For seven days and nights the demonstrations continued.

The parallels there are obvious. There was a pagan seven-day celebration taking place at the same time that God established a festival for Israel.

The Israelite undoubtedly felt he was serving the true God all the while that he was

serving Baal. We can certainly see parallels with that in our day. People are celebrating Christmas, Easter, and other days. As a matter of fact, there is a well-known large Christian denomination that has saint days. They have a saint for every day.

All Souls' Day, which follows Halloween, is for any saint who was unlucky enough not to have a day appropriated to him. We have something here with which we are familiar, only it was happening quite a few thousand years ago. It is a pattern that Satan has established to counterfeit celebrations of those true celebrations God has given to us.

Jeremiah 7 contains a very important set of scriptures. It is good to remember the chronology of when Jeremiah spoke. He began his prophecies during the time of Josiah. However, it is indicated within the context of the things Jeremiah wrote that many of them did not take place until after Josiah was dead.

Jeremiah really began preaching in earnest after Josiah was dead, because as long as Josiah was alive, things were going reasonably well. But after Josiah died, the bottom fell out, and they very quickly reverted back to what they were doing before Josiah instituted his reform. That is not something you can find by chapter and verse within the book, but it is something that is very clear within the context of the entire book of Jeremiah.

Understand that Jeremiah's preaching and writing took place *after* Josiah was dead, which indicates the repentance that took place during the reforms of Josiah was hollow. We will see this more clearly a little bit later. The repentance was just a surface thing, and not something that was really from the heart.

Jeremiah 7:1-3 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LOORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LOORD's house [the Temple], and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LOORD, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the LOORD! Thus says the LOORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Here is an indication Jeremiah said this after Josiah was dead, because when Josiah was alive they were mending their ways. Josiah did what he did, because after reading the book of Deuteronomy, and especially Deuteronomy 28 that had the curses in it, he knew that they had just about had it.

Josiah's reign came immediately after Manasseh's, which was a bad, foul fifty-five years

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of desecration of God's way. Josiah very quickly began to act, and as a result God's immediate punishment was averted. God gave Josiah a promise that His taking of Judah into captivity would not take place during Josiah's reign, but after Josiah died, the people went back to their old ways again.

Jeremiah 7:4 Do not trust in these lying words, saying, The temple of the LOORD, the temple of the LOORD, the temple of the LOORD are these.

This is just another way of saying, "I'm in the church. I'm okay. I'm safe. I am part of the body of Christ. I am part of the body that is going to go to the place of safety."

Jeremiah 7:5-7 For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

The promise is now extended. They must have known through Jeremiah and perhaps through other faithful prophets and faithful priests, that if they did obey God, then they would dwell in the land. If they did not, then they were going into captivity. But there was a whole body of false prophets and false priests who were telling the people, "Good times are here again! Everything is fine. You don't have to worry. Just keep going on the way you are. Everything is all right."

You can see this was nice smooth talk, making the people feel complacent. It sounds like Laodiceanism.

Jeremiah 7:8-10 Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

The people believed they were safe as long as they were in the church. They believed that somehow or another their attendance at services gave them absolution from having to pay for things they had done, and maybe for the things that they were planning to do

in the future. This is dangerous thinking that amounts to nothing more than superstition. In the midst of their gross wickedness they were so naïve as to believe that they would be delivered from impending destruction and disaster merely by going through the motions of attending church.

God's Temple is living people who are submissive to His way of life. We have to understand that the Temple of God—the church of God—does not afford protection of and by itself. The determining factor is obedience to the commands of God.

Remember that our overall subject here involves a major command of God, not on the order of one of the Ten Commandments. We are talking about Passover, and Passover would certainly fit within the framework of the Fourth Commandment—keeping the Sabbath, or the festivals of God. Nonetheless, it is very important to God, and if one begins to go aside from keeping God's Passover, one is going to lose very important teaching relative to the whole purpose and way of God.

I want to go through II Kings 17:7 again because I want us to see a summary of why Israel went into captivity. Very shortly we are going to skip from Israel to Judah, but it is important that we begin with Israel. We will then jump to Judah, and we will see that they were guilty of exactly the same things as Israel, only worse. Remember this, because it was Judah (the Jews) who have given us the late 14th-15th Passover, and they are culpable before God for what they have done. They got a lot of the ideas for what they did from Israel, and we will begin to see that here.

II Kings 17:7-12 For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LOORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LOORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LOORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree; and there they burned incense on all the high places, as the nations had done whom the LOORD had carried away before them: and they did wicked things to provoke the LOORD to anger, for they served idols, of which the LOORD had said to them, You shall not do this thing.

II Kings 17:14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LOORD their God.

II Kings 17:16-19 So they left all the commandments of the LOORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying. Therefore the LOORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LOORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

Now we are beginning to involve Judah. Judah should have learned from what happened to Israel, but they failed to learn. Instead, they learned to do the things that Israel did. Those things must have been rather exciting. It was certainly appealing to the flesh, and they fulfilled their desires by following after Israel. I do not think enough can be said of the horrible paganism into which Israel degenerated, but as evil as Israel was, Judah became worse.

Jeremiah 3:6-7 The LOORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king. Have you seen what backsliding Israel [the ten northern tribes] has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, Return to Me. But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

Israel went into captivity in 722 bc. Josiah came on the throne about one hundred years or so later. I believe the historians say it was about 626 bc. Josiah was eight years old when he came on the throne. A lot of water has passed over the dam. A lot of history has gone by.

The Jews now knew what was going on in Israel. They knew that the Assyrians came down and conquered Israel. That was not hidden from them. They knew why Israel went into captivity. They should have learned, but they did not. Even though what Judah did may not have been any worse in terms of the actual acts that they did, yet Judah is more culpable, more responsible, because they had an example to follow, or not to follow. "To whom much is given, from him much is required," and that is why God says Judah was worse.

Jeremiah 3:8-10 Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate

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of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. [They were so far gone there was no fear left.] So it came to pass, through her *casual harlotry*, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees [those images of the false gods]. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in *pretense*, says the LOORD.

Can you imagine that? No fear. It was just as if it did not matter at all. The harlotry we are talking about here is primarily spiritual harlotry—committing spiritual adultery by worshipping false gods.

Hypocrisy is involved here. The reforms by which the Jews came under the authority of God were made possible by hypocrisy. They reformed, but it was not of the heart. They did what Josiah said, but they really did not do it willingly. They did it because Josiah made them do it. He had to use the authority of the office of king to get these people to make the reforms. It was done with pretense. It was hollow. There was no real heart there.

Jeremiah 3:11 Then the LOORD said to me, Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

All those quotes I gave, especially from that book *The Religions of the Ancient Near East*, showed how rotten the religions were of Baal and Asherah, and yet Judah is worse. I guess we could say that Judah was so bad they made Israel look good, at least by comparison.

We are going to look at Ezekiel 23 so that we can get the picture here.

Ezekiel 23:1-5 The word of the LOORD came again to me, saying: Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. They committed harlotry in Egypt, they committed harlotry in their youth; their breasts were there embraced, their virgin bosom was there pressed. Their names: Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister; they were Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Samaria [Israel, the ten northern tribes] is Oholah, and Jerusalem [Judah, the two southern tribes] is Oholibah. Oholah played the harlot even though she was Mine; and she lusted for her lovers, the neighboring Assyrians.

Ezekiel 23:9 Therefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, for whom she lusted.

Ezekiel 23:11-12 Now although her sister Oholibah saw this, she became more corrupt in her inordinate love than she [Oholah], and in her harlotry more corrupt than her sister's harlotry. She lusted for the neighboring Assyrians, captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, horseman riding on horses, all of them desirable young men.

Ezekiel 23:16 As soon as her eyes saw them, she lusted for them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea.

These are the people who have given us the late 14th-15th Passover. I ask you, "Can they be trusted?"

I think I have shown you in quite a bit of detail that when God originally gave His commands in Exodus 12, and then reconfirmed them through the book of Exodus, beginning about chapter 25, when coupled with Numbers 9, 27, 28, and 33, He had every opportunity to make changes, but those commands given in Exodus 12 were never changed. It was to be that the Passover lamb was to be slain at the beginning of the 14th.

The people then spent the daytime portion of the 14th making preparations for leaving. Those preparations included marching and getting themselves in order so that they could leave the city of Rameses. Then they went **out**, beginning probably right about near sunset of the 14th day, and so they left Egypt by **night**, at the beginning of the 15th. It undoubtedly took them most of the night to get out of there.

How in the world did we ever get a late 14th sacrifice and a 15th celebration of the day of Passover? That is what we are going to look at now. How did it ever come to pass? How did it ever get changed? There is enough information in the Bible for us to be able to see the outline of it. I do not say that we will see tremendous detail. I do not say that we will see God giving a scripture to change it, because He never did. It is just simply not there.

II Chronicles 28:1-5 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. He

burned incense in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought them to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter.

Ahaz was among the worst of Judah's kings. "Burned in the fire" mentioned there means that his children were sacrificed to Baal. Their lives were given up as an offering to Baal. We learned from the previous sermon that our English word for "cannibal" means "priests of Baal." It was required of the priests to eat some of this human sacrifice. I do not say that it absolutely happened, but it is entirely possible since it is mentioned here, that he burned his children in the fire and that Ahaz's own children were, at least in part, eaten by the priests of Baal. That is the kind of man we are dealing with here. That is the kind of practice the leadership of the Judean nation was doing, setting an example for the rest of the people to follow.

In II Chronicles 29:1 we see that Ahaz's reign is over, and Hezekiah his son becomes the king. Under Hezekiah a revival occurred.

II Chronicles 29:1-4 Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. [We can see that the Temple had fallen into disrepair because of the acts of Ahaz.] And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square.

Right here I want you to begin to see the way the Bible is presenting Hezekiah. It is presenting Hezekiah as *in control*. He is the one bringing about the reform. Things are being done because Hezekiah wants them done. He is doing the kind of thing that the priests ought to be doing. The priests ought to be the ones leading the revival. Were they not the agents of God? Was not the high priest the mediator between God and man under their system? Absolutely! They should have been leading the revival, but they were not. The king was doing it. The king has taken charge.

II Chronicles 29:5-10 And said to them: Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LOORD God of your fathers, [He did not say *your* God, but *the LORD God of your fathers.*] and carry out the rubbish from the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LOORD our God; [Now it is *our* God.] they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the habitation of the LOORD, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. Therefore the wrath of the LOORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to astonishment, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. [Remember, we just read some of this stuff about what happened to Ahaz] Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LOORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us.

The Bible shows very clearly, from the time of Moses, that civil authority exceeds the authority of religion. We have here a civil figure, a civil authority. Hezekiah is the driving force in regard to this revival. The Bible presents prophets that came after Moses as being *outside* of both civil *and* religious authority. They were sent by God and they operated, as it were, on their own.

They carried a powerful message, but they wielded no actual authority in the execution of their responsibility. They simply went to the king and said, "This is what you ought to do," or they went to the high priest and said, "The LOORD has said this you need to do." They did not stand there with a rod and beat them, and say, "This you must do."

We see then a structure of government with the king being in supreme authority, and the high priest being subject to him. However, in this case the king has taken the authority to lead the revival himself. This is a very interesting situation.

Under Samuel, the prophet, the priest, and the judge were combined in one man; that is, in Samuel. It separated again whenever God made Saul king. Once again civil authority was now in the hand of the king. But Saul did not do too well in that office, and so he was replaced by David—a man who would do God's bidding.

David was a man who was responsible for writing many psalms, and he was

undoubtedly a very great man in God's eyes. However, whenever David sinned, who corrected him? The priest did. That should have been the priest's responsibility. Nathan was a faithful priest, and Nathan **did** what was his responsibility to do.

Now that should have happened here. The priests should have been leading the revival. They should have gone to the king and said, "Now look, King Hezekiah, you should be doing thus and such." But we do not see that. We see that Hezekiah has grabbed the bull by the horns, and he is the one who is giving the orders. The spiritual man was not the priest in this case. It was the king, and he was the driving force both in civil and in spiritual affairs.

Hezekiah has made a major step, and he has assumed authority over the priesthood in a way that other kings did not. A unique situation has arisen here, and God, in His mercy, allowed it to be put in His word so we would have an example that this was done.

Now *why* did Hezekiah do it? This faithful man, Hezekiah, came on the scene during a period of extreme spiritual rebellion. Something had to be done because they were just about, according to Hezekiah's judgment, going to be allowed to go into captivity, and so he grabbed the bull by the horns and he did what had to be done.

II Chronicles 29:17 Now they began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LOORD. Then they sanctified the house of the LOORD in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

Passover is already past. We all understand that Numbers 9 contains a command within it that if a person is unclean at the time of the first Passover, he is then permitted by God to take the second Passover thirty days later. But as we saw clearly, it had to be done in the same manner as the original Passover commands were to be done. We will see what happened.

II Chronicles 30:1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LOORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LOORD God of Israel.

We are now one month later.

II Chronicles 30:6-7 Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the commandment of the **king**: Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to astonishment, as you see.

II Chronicles 30:12-13 Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to do *the commandment of the king* and the leaders, at the word of the LORD. Now many people, a very great congregation, assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

First I want you to notice authority for what I said a little bit earlier that this Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, which are the focal point of a reform, a revival that occurred under Hezekiah, were done at the commandment of the king. It was not done at the commandment of God. They took advantage of a commandment of God that they were allowed to keep the Passover thirty days later, but as we are seeing here now, they not only kept the Passover, but they also kept the Days of Unleavened Bread. There was nothing like that said in the law.

I bring this up to you just to reinforce that we are dealing with an unusual circumstance here. Hezekiah sincerely felt that the lives of the people and their continued existence as a nation was on the line. He took the bull by the horns and he said, "We are going to make a covenant with God. We are going to repent. We are going to reform, and we are going to begin this by cleaning out the Temple."

After the Temple was cleaned out, they were past the Passover, and Hezekiah said, "We're going to keep the Passover **and** the Days of Unleavened Bread in the second month, beginning with the 14th day of the second month." This was an unusual situation, all done at the commandment of the king.

Taken at face value, I think we would have to say that Hezekiah was bending the rules. Considering the circumstance, I think we would also have to say it was justified. This Passover took place about 140 years after the captivity of Israel. Remember, Israel went into captivity, and Ezra, who is the author of I and II Chronicles, did not write until about 100 years after the captivity of Judah. Now why would Ezra write what he did? This is

just to put a thought, a question, in your mind.

I do not know who wrote I Kings, but II Kings, which is a parallel to II Chronicles, does not even have a mention of this Passover. If we would go through the chapters in II Kings devoted to Josiah, there is only a two-verse mention of an even more astounding and spectacular Passover that Josiah kept. Why did the book of II Kings pay no attention to Hezekiah's Passover? But more interesting is why did the book of Chronicles, written by Ezra, contain it? Does it have something to do with the Jews now keeping a late 14th-15th Passover? I think we will answer that question as we go along.

Again notice that these things were done *according to the commandment of the king*. Hezekiah is shown as being completely in charge. If we look at verse 1 again, the Passover is mentioned. In verse 13 we find the Feast of Unleavened Bread is mentioned. Here is the first time in Scripture that there is any indication that Passover and Unleavened Bread are linked together in an unusual way.

The Jews of Jesus' day called that whole period of time Passover. That was their common approach to it. Here we have the first indication of a linking together of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, with the Days of Unleavened Bread also called "Passover" in the first verse. The name did not get changed here, but it is the first indication of something that is going to come.

Why did Hezekiah do what he did? I have already shown you enough information that Judah was more culpable in what they did. They were more responsible. They were treacherous in their handling of the law of God. I have read to you quotes from *The Religions of the Ancient Near East*, showing you the practices that were being kept, celebrated, and observed in the northern Ten Tribes *and* in Judah as well. I specifically read to you a quote that had to do with a 7-day festival dedicated to Baal that was kept at exactly the same time as God's Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Knowing the people's mind, does it not seem likely to you that if Hezekiah had not taken charge and forced them under the threat of the authority of the government, that if they did not do thus and such, it was not going to go well for them? That is exactly what he did. In order for him to control things, rather than allow the people to sacrifice the Passover lamb at their homes, he instead moved the operation to the Temple so he could personally watch and supervise what was going on.

II Chronicles 30:13-21 Now many people, a very great congregation, assembled at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem,

and they took away all the incense altars and cast them into the Brook Kidron. Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LOORD. They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood which they received from the hand of the Levites. For there were many in the congregation who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LOORD. For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover **contrary** to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, May the good LOORD provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LOORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LOORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people. So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the LOORD day by day, singing to the LOORD, accompanied by loud instruments.

Notice these differences between this Passover kept and celebrated in the days of Hezekiah, at the king's command, with what we have learned from Exodus 12 and Exodus 25 through 40. This is the very first time in the Bible that we have these things appearing.

- » This Passover was at the command of the king.
- » The lambs were killed at the Temple.
- » Levites killed the lambs.
- » After the lamb was killed the blood was passed to the priest from the Levites who dashed it on the altar. (It was supposed to be dashed on the door posts of their homes.)
- » The Passover was eaten other than was written. (Remember that they had to eat it and then burn up what was left over.)
- » Hezekiah prayed for the people. (It was not the priest praying for them, but

Hezekiah.)

Ezra was faithful to let us know that even in the days of Solomon and David when the nation had God's favor, it was not done this way. You would think that if they had God's favor there might be more leniency. But no, even in the days of Solomon and David no Passover was kept like this. Even though it was a Passover to God, it was different from what was commanded in Exodus. The main reason is because of the total paganization of the Judeans. They were so steeped in Baalism that it was not possible to trust them to keep a Passover at home.

I am going to give you a quote from *The Interpreter's Bible*, volume 5, page 868. The author is talking about the law as it is given in the book of Deuteronomy.

The heart of Deuteronomic law is not a legal enactment but a pleading for the generous heart. It is aimed at purification of the religious practices of the people. It is sought to bring this about through centralization of worship in the Temple at Jerusalem, and in this way the corruptions which entered into the religious practice through compromise with Canaanite cults of Baal could be brought under control and purified.

That is exactly what Hezekiah attempted. He attempted, through a centralization of the worship, to somehow bring about a purification. It failed, but it was one good king's attempt to try to do something to turn the people around, and I have no doubt at all that God accepted it. It was better than no Passover at all. Even though God accepted it, this does not mean God changed His original command. It is very clearly seen the people understood this, because I gave you readings from books by Philo and Josephus that clearly showed that in the days of Christ the people were still offering the Passover sacrifice in their own homes.

The Passover under II Chronicles does **not** give authority for a change. It is only recording a very unusual circumstance in which the king took control of the situation. He tried to turn the nation around by centralizing the worship so that he could keep track of what the people were doing. This Passover led to even greater reform, but it did not change things for very long.

We now move along in time. We had a bad king—Ahaz. Then we had a good king—Hezekiah. We now come to the worst king the Jews ever had—Hezekiah's son, Manasseh. In the entire history of Israel and Judah there was in all probability never a

more depraved society than the one that was lead by Manasseh. It makes my mind go blank trying to verbalize and to come up with the words to describe the things that were going on in that society.

II Kings 21:1-7 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the LOORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LOORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed. [Does that not make your mind boggle? Does history mean anything?] He raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the LOORD. [He put those abominable things right in there] And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LOORD. Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LOORD, to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LOORD had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever.

II Kings 21:15-16 Because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day. Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LOORD.

King Manasseh was really a foul personality.

I do not know why it occurs this way, but again we now have another good king coming out of the chaos of a horrible king. In II Chronicles 34 we find a brief summary of what Josiah did. We will not go into all of that because we will be concentrating on the Passover that was kept after Josiah heard the words of the law after the priests found it while they were cleaning the Temple.

In II Chronicles 34 is a statement by God which He gave through a prophetess by the name of Huldah. After Josiah heard the words of the law he tore his clothes, which was symbolic of his feelings of frustration and humility over what was being done. He then did the right thing and sought out a prophet or prophetess. In this case it happened to

be a prophetess.

II Chronicles 34:24-26 Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured on this place and not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LOORD, in this manner you shall speak to him.

She is basically saying that God says the calamity will not come until after Josiah has died. We find here another very zealous king cut in the mold of Hezekiah. It is just a personal opinion of mine, that if he had not died so early, he might have gone on to be Israel's and Judah's second greatest king, maybe right after David. We are dealing here with another very fine king.

We have another spiritual emergency, and so Josiah, like Hezekiah, in his zeal for God, forced the leaders of Judah to follow God. Just like Hezekiah had to do, Josiah had to use the power of his office as king to make the people do what was right.

II Chronicles 34:29-32 Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the LOORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which had been found in the house of the LOORD. Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LOORD, to follow the LOORD, to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take their stand for it.

Josiah was not pussyfooting around. He was using the power of his office as king, and he made them do it.

II Chronicles 34:33 Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LOORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LOORD God of their fathers.

What we have here is a dictatorship. It was not just a king ruling. He simply took over the nation, lock, stock, and barrel. As in the time of Hezekiah, a crisis was reached. Either their sins had to be purged, or a calamity of going into captivity was going to very shortly occur. We have a national emergency, and in this national emergency Josiah acted as he did.

II Chronicles 35:1-5 Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LOORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month. And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the LOORD. Then he said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to the LOORD: Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. It shall no longer be a burden on your shoulders. Now serve the LOORD your God and His people Israel. Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son. And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the lay people, and according to the division of the father's house of the Levites.

Josiah here is enforcing the policies as to the responsibilities of the priests according to the order established under David and Solomon. That is primarily what he is talking about here. We see Josiah personally supervising this Passover. Again, this is after the time of Manasseh. Josiah did it because the people were so pagan that if he let them do it on their own, they would have very quickly reverted back to what they had always practiced.

Here again is a situation similar to the days of Hezekiah. This was a national emergency, and the king simply assumed control. In his zeal he does it in a way he feels will be acceptable to God under the circumstances. He felt that if these people sacrificed the lambs at their own houses, they would have done it to Baal, and not to God.

II Chronicles 35:6 So slaughter the Passover offerings, sanctify yourselves, and prepare them for your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LOORD by the hand of Moses.

The phrase "the word of the LOORD by the hand of Moses" is referring back to "sanctified,

" and not to the killing of the Passover.

You will notice here the term "Passover offerings." This is not necessarily the slaughtering of the Passover lamb, but at the slaughter of animals *in addition* to the Passover lamb.

II Chronicles 35:7 Then Josiah gave the lay people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover offerings for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand **cattle**; these were from the king's possessions.

Did you ever read anywhere where the Passover was to consist of a cow, or a bull, or a young bullock? These were from the king's possessions.

II Chronicles 35:8 And his leaders gave willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings two thousand six hundred from the flock, and three hundred *cattle*.

We find all through there the mention of cattle. These things were not for the Passover offering, but rather were for burnt offerings that were in addition to the sacrificial lamb—the true Passover lamb. These offerings were offered as burnt offerings, peace offerings, and thank offerings. They were offered on the Passover day as well as on the Days of Unleavened Bread. We read of these offerings there in Numbers 28 and 29.

We have something that is very clear here, and that is that for the first time in the Bible the entire eight days is called Passover. There were intimations of it. They were vague, but there were intimations of it in regard to Hezekiah's Passover, but here there is no doubt about it at all that the entire eight days is called Passover. That is very interesting, because in secular history the calling of the entire eight days as Passover does not show up for a couple of hundred years. What has happened? Is it possible that somebody edited what we are reading here, and inserted a word or two here and there?

II Chronicles 35:14 Then afterward they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were busy in offering burnt offerings and fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.

This was done properly and so we do not have to bother too much with that.

When were these sacrifices made? They did a lot of offerings here. I submit to you that it is entirely possible that they may have even begun at the right time early on the 14th. But there were so many being sacrificed right at the Temple that they were sacrificing animals right on through the 14th, and it is entirely possible that they were still sacrificing animals right on into the 15th as well.

In another sermon we are going to see how long it took the priests to go through the Temple sacrifice, and how would it be impossible for all of the Passover sacrifices to be killed at the Temple. It is impossible when one sees the figure. We can thank Josephus for giving us an idea of how many animals were sacrificed. Would you believe 256,000 during a typical Passover in his day? Were they all sacrificed at the Temple? Impossible!

We are going to see that very few were sacrificed at the Temple. Most of the people in Jesus' day were still sacrificing it at home. Josiah's Passover did not change anything. Like Hezekiah's, it was a national emergency in which a king took control of the situation. He made sure that at least they had a Passover that had a chance to be acceptable before God, because if they had done it the way they were accustomed to doing it, it would have ended up as a festival kept in honor of Baal, and not God.

We have here a dramatic change from God's original command. Apparently the only way they could even come close to what God commands was to have an authoritative hand for them to obey. They simply could not be trusted to obey God with a willing heart. I again believe that God acknowledged and accepted it. Even though it was not done exactly the same way that He would want it, it was better than nothing.

We have to learn from this. Even though God will permit some things like this to occur, as His people, we should willingly do it the way He said He wants it done. We must not allow what became a tradition of the Jews to take the place of what God has commanded and never changed. These things were done at the command of the king.

When God says that we have to live by every Word of God, He means it. There is no "thus saith the LORD" that is connected with either Hezekiah's or Josiah's Passover. It never changed. We have to learn that when God makes a change, **God** will make the change. He will clearly say, "I am telling you thus and such, and so and so."

We have to understand this, because for the advocates of a 15th Passover, Deuteronomy 16 is the central proof as evidence that God commanded the Temple-

killed Passover sacrifice. On the surface it appears to require that the sacrifice only be made at the Temple, but we are going to begin now the other side of the story.

Let me remind you what Wellhausen, the German scholar, concluded after reviewing the information regarding Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Deuteronomy 16.

Quote from *The Interpreter's Bible*, volume 3, page 668:

From all of this, the coalescence [the joining together of Passover and Unleavened Bread] did not occur until the time of Josiah. The agricultural festival of Unleavened Bread was kept as such as a national Israelite feast [Wellhausen felt] until the days of Josiah. The section in Deuteronomy 16, verses 1 through 10, was interpreted [by Wellhausen] as an attempt to abolish the private Passover celebration, and to eliminate the divine protection of the blood sprinkled on the door posts and lintel characteristics of the domestic observance of the Passover. Therefore, the Passover was combined with the national Feast of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem.

Did you catch what Wellhausen said? He said, "[it] was interpreted as an attempt to abolish the private Passover celebration." It sounds sinister, like there was some subversive element or group that actually brought about changes in the Bible that contradict other commands. Wellhausen is the one who concluded that, looking at it as an observer, you might say, from the outside.

Does it not appear as though two factions were at work, and one was trying to eliminate the observance of certain things in order that other observances might be kept?

If it is true that Deuteronomy 16 actually commands a Temple-sacrificed lamb, it contradicts Exodus 12, Numbers 9, and Leviticus 23, which are clear and easily understood. We also find that Deuteronomy 16 gives the impression that Passover and Unleavened Bread are one festival.

We are going to have to proceed slowly here. Be prepared to take good notes, and to be able to flip back and forth in your Bible as we compare clear statements with obscure ones. Maybe even then you are going to have to listen to the tape another time or two before it will really become clear.

You are going to be surprised to learn that in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 there are at least ten

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or twelve contradictions. Somebody messed with the scriptures. Who was that somebody? Is it possible we might even know the personality who did it? If we do know the personality who did it, was it done in meanness? Was it done to subvert? Is it possible that it was even done like Hezekiah and Josiah did, with good intentions, and something bad arose out of it?

In the next sermon we will go into this and try to come up with the answers. I hope you will find it fascinating as we continue to go through this, because it is getting to a very interesting point of Scripture. I think this is the lesson all of us need to know.

God has kept His Word written in such a way that those who are humble before Him can have the answers even though somebody may have edited part of the Bible and made it appear to disagree with other things.