

Passover (Part 10)

Passover in the New Testament

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From the scriptural evidence that I have given you over the past nine weeks, I think we can honestly conclude that the instructions in Deuteronomy 16, as originally given by God, were for Unleavened Bread and not Passover. The word "Passover" was edited into the text at a later time when both feasts were commonly called Passover, and this appears to be at a time after the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon.

To those who believe in a 15th Passover, Deuteronomy 16 is the cornerstone of their beliefs. It is their only proof-text of a 15th Passover. The reason for this is because all other Scriptures *clearly* show a 14th Passover. But Deuteronomy 16, as it appears in most modern Bibles, has clearly been incorrectly edited. The scriptural truth is that God never commanded a 15th Passover at any time. It is only a tradition of the Jews, and that is what Wellhausen—that German rationalist scholar—clearly saw when he stated that it seemed to him an attempt to abolish the home-sacrificed-lamb practice that had been going on all the time since Exodus 12.

Why were these particular Scriptures chosen as the ones to be edited? It was very likely because Deuteronomy 16 does not contain any numbered dates—for example, "Passover is on the 14th, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th." Because of the lack of numbers, the text in Deuteronomy 16 could be edited and changed to give the *appearance* of a 15th Passover. But if the texts of Exodus 12, Numbers 9, and Leviticus 23 would be altered, somebody would have to alter the numbers, and that would result in very dramatic editing. That was unthinkable, and it would have been very obvious, too, that the Scriptures had been tampered with.

However, with Deuteronomy 16, the *day* could be changed without changing any numbers, and so all it took was the insertion of the name "Passover" in place of the name "Unleavened Bread," and claiming, in addition to this, that the "going down of the sun" and "between the two evenings" are one and the same.

This is exactly what the Jews claim today. They say in their written material, "**This** is the way it has always been." But it **has not** always been this way. This is why Exodus 16:12-13 is so important, where it shows clearly that *ben ha arbayim*—"between the two evenings," **follows** *ba erev*—"the going down of the sun."

Who would have the authority to make such a change from Unleavened Bread to

Passover in Deuteronomy 16? The finger of history points to someone during or after the time of Ezra. Ezra came along in the period roughly between 530 BC and about 515 BC. When Ezra came on the scene, the Jews, who had just come out of captivity, were again starting down the same path that originally took them into captivity.

Ezra knew what Hezekiah and Josiah had done. Remember that Hezekiah and Josiah took control of the celebration or the observance of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and everything was done at that time at the command of the king, and so they forcibly caused the priests and the people to observe Passover in a way that the king could control. So Ezra, knowing what these men had done—there was historical precedence for that then—acted to centralize worship by focusing religious power in the priesthood, the Temple, and the Sanhedrin (The Great Assembly), which was brought about under the governance of Ezra. He did this for the same reason that Hezekiah and Josiah did, in an effort to keep the people from breaking God's law and sinning, and thus going again into captivity. Their intentions were good, but no matter how well-intentioned these men (Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, or whoever) were, they had no authority to make an everlasting change from what God had originally commanded.

That brings up a question. Can we look to the New Testament to prove that statement I just made—that they had no everlasting authority to make a change? The answer to that is "Yes." Jesus Christ, and what He did, gives us the answer.

If Jesus kept Passover the way it was kept by Hezekiah, Josiah, and Ezra, then we know assuredly that because He did it that way, then that was a right way. If Jesus did not do it that way, but if He kept Passover the way that God had instructed in Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, and Numbers 9, then we know that there was no everlasting authority ever given to Hezekiah, Josiah, or Ezra to make that change.

Before we go into that I think there is something else we have to go into and explore at least briefly. This is something that I feel is worth looking into because it is of some importance to understanding the New Testament Passover. And that is, how many lambs could possibly be slaughtered at the Temple by the priests so people could keep Passover in the way that the Jews changed it to? We are talking about millions of people, friends, and brethren. No small number.

There are historical records of how many people were keeping Passover. Among these is a record that was left to us, or given to us, by Josephus. I am going to read to you from *Wars of the Jews* by Josephus, Book 6, Chapter 9, Section 3. I'm not going to be quoting the entire section, but I am going to be quoting two parts of Section 3. He is describing the keeping of the Passover in Jerusalem.

Wars of the Jews by Josephus, Book Six, Chapter 9, Section 3:

So these priests upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh, but so that a company not less than ten belong to every sacrifice, . . .

What he is saying is that ten people was the general number of people that partook of each lamb that was sacrificed.

... found the number of sacrifices [in Jerusalem in the keeping of this Passover thought to be the Passover in 4 BC] was two hundred and fifty-six thousand five hundred [256,500 lambs]; which, upon the allowance of no more than ten that feast together, amounts to two million seven hundred thousand and two hundred persons that were pure and holy was 256,500 lambs.

The number of people who kept the Passover in Jerusalem in 4 BC was 2,700,200. This figure was calculated by multiplying 10 x 256,000 lambs.

Think about that, brethren, because we are going to see in a little bit, quoting from books, that the killing of the lambs at the Temple was restricted to a 2-hour period, and during that 2-hour period 256,500 lambs were killed. How could that possibly be? Or is that grossly absurd? Is the figure exaggerated? I will make a guess that the figure that Josephus gave is accurate as to the number of lambs that were killed, and accurate as to the number of people who kept the feast in Jerusalem, but what is left out is that all of those lambs were not slain at the Temple.

There are three valuable sources that to which one can turn to show beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Temple-sacrificed lambs were inadequate in numbers to serve the entirety of the nation. You have to remember this, because Deuteronomy 16 gives you the implication that the only place that lambs were allowed to be slaughtered was at the Temple. If that is true, there is a **gross** distortion between what Josephus—who was on the scene for many of these things—gives as a figure, and what we are going to be seeing could **possibly** be the number of lambs that were actually sacrificed there.

The first source is the *Mishna*, which is a Jewish commentary put together somewhere about 200 AD. The *Mishna* gives detailed instructions as to how and where the sacrifices were to be made. It gave all the procedures as to how and where it had to be

confined to.

The second source is from Alfred Edersheim. He was a Jew who converted to Christianity. He wrote a book entitled *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as they were in the time of Christ*. He presents detailed word-pictures of every step of the operation so that we moderns might be able to understand more clearly exactly what had to be done.

The third source is a fairly modern work authored by Joachim Jeremias. His book is called *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*. He gives time and space calculation on pages 79-83 in his book. Listen to what Joachim Jeremias says in regard to how many lambs could be slaughtered in the area that the *Mishna* says that they had to be slaughtered by the number of priests. In this case it could be lay people who were there to slaughter, because they had to be slaughtered within the confines of the Temple ground.

He says, at most, 6,400 lambs could be slaughtered during each course. There were three courses of men doing the slaughtering. That would be at most 19,200 lambs. But Joachim Jeremias was a little bit shaky about his figures here, and so he decided to round it off and be conservative. What he was shaky about was how much space and how many people could be crowded into that space, and so he said that 18,000 lambs could be slaughtered during that 2-hour period by the number of priests or laymen who were inside the confines of the Temple area slaughtering the Passover lamb. Now 18,000 times 10 gives a figure of 180,000 keeping the Passover.

Brethren, that is 2,520,000 people short of the figure that Josephus gave, and Josephus was on the scene! He was right there. Now even if we cut Josephus' figure in half to 1,350,000, that would still require 135,000 lambs. Given the constraints of 2 hours to kill, and the limited space at the Temple to do the sacrificing at the rate of 18,000 per day, it would have taken seven and a half days—that is the entire feast of Unleavened Bread—to kill one-half the number of lambs Josephus said were killed.

If we take as true and accurate the figure that Josephus gave us of 256,000 lambs, it would have taken 15 days for all of those lambs to be slaughtered in the way that the *Mishna* and Alfred Edersheim and Joachim Jeremias say that they had to be killed.

I think that we can say there can be no doubt that far more lambs were required for observing Passover than could possibly be slain at the Temple within the constraints of time and space given by rabbinical sources. The problem is solved when we accept the fact that most people in the first century, who were keeping the Passover, actually did kill their own lambs separate from the priests and the Temple.

We will see that is exactly what happened. We will see the proof is in the New Testament that this was what was going on. In other words, there were two different approaches to keeping the Passover that were going on at exactly the same time historically.

As we begin our study in the New Testament, I think we need to survey the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as recorded in the Gospels before we focus our attention on Jesus' last Passover.

Turn now to Luke 22:1. What I want you to get out of these first few Scriptures is the qualification that appears by these men, writing under the inspiration of God, so that future from their time when history begins to become a bit clouded and foggy because we do not have other information that might be clear, there is a clear record in the Bible that some tampering had been done in the past, and that God ordained these men to give us the truth, if we are willing to accept it. Now look what Luke recorded.

Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, *which is called Passover*.

Now **where** is it called Passover? It was commonly called Passover by the people, but it was not called Passover by God. Here we have the beginning of a record in the New Testament by inspired writings, written to you and me in 20th century AD, so that we will understand that there has been some sleight of hand going on. We will be able to see that a name-change has occurred, and what used to be known as *the Passover* (one feast), and *Unleavened Bread* (a separate feast), is now combined together, and the whole thing is called "the Passover." And so that we do not get confused, it was necessary for those inspired writers to clarify this for us, and to differentiate the Passover day from the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Go now to Mark 14:1, and we will see that Mark too makes a clarification.

Mark 14:1 After two days, it was the Passover and *the Feast* of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death.

I want you to notice the italics that are in this verse. We will get back to this a little bit later. I just want to jog your mind in regard to this. I think that all of us understand that when italics appear in the Scripture like this, it means there are words that are missing;

words not necessarily missing from the Greek language, but they are missing in such a way that the translators feel that with the insertion of words, which they put in italics, it will make things clear. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it does not. Sometimes the insertions are correct and clarify. At other times the insertions actually make things fuzzier. We will see. This time it seems as though the insertions are appropriate here in Mark 14:1 There is a clear distinction. Mark makes it clear that Passover and the Feast of Unleavened are two different feasts.

Let us go now to Luke 2. This is especially interesting in light of information that is floating around here in this time of 1992.

Luke 2:41-43 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the Feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it.

It is called here in verse 41 "the Feast of Passover." But look now at verse 43. "When they had finished the days...."

Days is plural. How many days are there in the feast of Passover, as the instructions are given back in the Old Testament, in Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, and Numbers 9? **One** day to the feast of Passover; **seven** days to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Verse 43 says "When they had ***finished*** [completed] the days." Now what days did He keep?

If He was just keeping Passover in Jerusalem, do you not think Luke would have said, "And having completed *the day*"? But he says "*days*." Again we are dealing with a place that is obviously referring to the Days of Unleavened Bread (plural), but it is being called "Passover."

Let us look at that again. Some advocates of a 15th Passover claim that this verse shows that Jesus kept a 15th Passover. It does nothing of the kind, but this is to them a proof-text. What it is saying here in Luke 2:41 and 43 is that He kept the *days* (plural) of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem. It does not say that He kept the Passover there, but He may also have kept it there. You see, it is not a proof-text for the keeping of either a 14th Passover or a 15th Passover in Jerusalem. It is a proof-text for sure that He kept the Days (plural) of Unleavened Bread there. What it does show then is that Jesus was keeping the commandments of God in regard to the Days (plural) of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus, who came from God, and was the God of the Old Testament, was the Son of God, and lived a perfect life, would not have kept anything added to God's law by way of the traditions of men. I think that it is appropriate to insert this statement at this time. Jesus would **NOT** have kept the traditions of men. How do we know that? Because His own words prove it.

Matthew 15:3 But He answered and said to them, Why do you transgress the commandment of God because of your traditions?

Do you see that? Is that not plain? *Keeping the traditions of men in a spiritual relationship with God transgresses the commandments of God.*

Matthew 15:8 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

There it is again. Jesus strongly denounced the traditions of the Jews. Jesus is strongly and forcefully declaring that the keeping of the traditions of men is transgressing the commandments of God. Is that not plain? Mark repeats it in Mark 7:7, which is in a little bit different context, but the same principle comes through there. Let us go to John 15.

John 15:9 As the Father loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

Abide means *to continue in, live in*, in the sense of being part of a process. Love is defined as keeping the commandments of God. John 14:15: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." I John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, [Here comes the definition], that you keep His commandments." This is the definition of love. That is very basic to the Christian way of life, to understand that the keeping of the commandments **is love**. If we are going to live, or abide, or continue in the love of God, we are going to keep on keeping His commandments and not the traditions of men. That is the way Jesus lived.

Please apply these principles to Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Jesus is giving us evidence. He would **NOT** keep the traditions of men, such as a 15th Passover.

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.

It is plainly evident from Scripture that Jesus would have never kept the traditional Jewish 15th of Abib Passover observance.

Luke 2:46-47 Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

This took place in the spring when Jesus was twelve and one-half years old, and yet His understanding amazed the teachers at the Temple. Now how could this be? Most twelve and one-half year olds would get a smile and a pat on the head from a rabbi, and they would say, "Oh! Isn't that cute?" But this young fellow was amazing them at the things that He understood.

I think that we have to conclude that Jesus not only had an extraordinary mind, as is revealed here in Luke 2, but also He must have had an extraordinary education—one that was unique in that the greatest mind that ever lived was able to, at the age of twelve, confound or amaze those who had studied the word of God perhaps twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years. That indicates not only an extraordinary mind, but also an extraordinary education. None of us has been able to do anything like that.

Why is this important in relation to Passover? It is important because there are those in these days who believe that Jesus was taught and brought up according to the traditions of the Jews, that He observed the religion of the Jews, and that in habit, custom, tradition, teaching, and mind-set He was Jewish to the core! Some have gone so far as to claim that Jesus was a Pharisee—a Pharisaical rabbi—and that He therefore kept the Passover according the Pharisaic custom on the 15th day as a regular practice. Brethren, nothing could be further from the truth, and I am going to prove that to you right now.

Turn to John 7. Here is a Feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus was on the mind of many people, and they were asking where He was.

John 7:13-15 However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews. Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How does this Man know letters, having never studied?

Now wait a minute here! Are they inferring that Jesus never cracked the Bible? Are these people inferring that nobody ever taught Jesus? No. "Not having learned" means that He was not taught in **their** schools—their **rabbinical** schools. Jesus' teaching came directly from the Father.

John 8:26 I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.

"Never having learned"? No. It does not mean that Jesus never learned. It means that He did not go to the same school, the same rabbinical schools, that they did.

John 8:28 Then said Jesus unto them, When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

Oh, He was taught! He had the greatest and best teacher. He had the greatest and best and most important education anybody on earth in all of the history of mankind ever had, and it was already showing when He was twelve and one-half years old. No, He was not taught by men. He was taught by the Father. He did not need to be taught by men. He had the best teacher that there ever was.

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

Was this reference to a visible manifestation of the Father? I think it is possible, but even if it does not mean actually a visible representation of the Father right in front of Jesus Christ, it certainly means that He saw things out of the Scripture under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit which God was giving to Him in order to enable Him to see, to comprehend, to understand.

John 5:20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

It would be a real insult to the Father and the Son to say that Jesus needed to attend a rabbinical school. Can you begin to understand why the apostle Paul later on said that he was not taught by men, or learned these things from men?

John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

So "*not having learned*" means that He was not taught at the rabbinical schools the way the other religious leaders were. He was not taught by men. He was taught by His Father.

Luke 2:49-50 And He said to them, Why is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Even as a child He felt under divine compulsion to be about His Father's affairs. Since we have learned from the Old Testament about the Passover, and now added this about Jesus' education, we can be assured that He had never—absolutely never—observed a late 14th/early 15th Passover, using a Temple-sacrificed lamb, because it was a commandment of men. It is that clear.

The apostle John clearly distinguishes between the feasts as the Jews improperly kept them according to their own traditions, and the feasts of God. Some people claim that we ought to keep the feasts in the same manner as the Jews did. However, if we did, we would be keeping the traditions of men, and observing them or showing them to be of greater value than the commandments of God. Apparently John wrote what he did so that we would be able to distinguish that Jesus did **NOT** keep the Passover in the same manner as the Jews.

John 2:13-16 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!

John was not talking about the Passover. It is the Feast of Unleavened Bread that John was talking about here, but called "Passover." I want you to notice the context in which this appears. There is no indication from the context that Jesus agreed with the way the Jews were keeping it. If He agreed with the way the Jews were keeping it, do you not think that He would have come into the Temple and said, "Oh, isn't that nice? Look at the moneychangers over there. They're selling all these things so that the people can make a beautiful wonderful sacrifice to God. Isn't that nice? Oh, how beautiful!"

I do not think He agreed with the way that it was being done. You see, just the opposite is true. He forcefully denounced and corrected the Jews for violating the feast with their merchandising, thievery, and corruption. I submit to you that is why John called it "the feast of the Jews." That was **not** the way it was supposed to be kept. There is prior authority for doing this. In Isaiah 1, God says, "Your new moons and your feasts I hate." In Amos 5 He says "I hate, I despise your feasts." I have read in commentaries where the commentators say there is no indication that these were feasts of Baal, but rather they were the feasts days *of God* that were kept in honor of Baal.

So here is Jesus, in John 2, repeating in a little bit milder way what had already been done in the Old Testament, and He did it by denouncing, by throwing out the moneychangers and the merchandisers who were there.

John 6:3-4 And Jesus went up on a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Passover, *a feast of the Jews*, was near.

John 11:55 And *the Passover of the Jews* was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.

Now notice the difference when John begins to write about the last Passover that Jesus kept.

John 12:1 Then, six days before the *Passover*, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

Do you see a difference? Jesus is going to keep a Passover, and it is not "the Passover *of the Jews*." It is in direct contradistinction to "the Passovers of the Jews" that He mentioned in the previous four or five verses that appear in chapter 11.

Look now at John 13:1. The chronology has us here on the 14th of Abib, in the evening. The Passover lamb has been slain. Jesus is keeping the Passover.

John 13:1 Now before the feast of the *Passover*, [It is "*the*" Passover, definite article], when Jesus knew that His hour had come.

When was His hour to come? In the afternoon of the 14th. And so we have here in the chronology a time period that agrees precisely with the Passover of Exodus 12, Numbers 9, and Leviticus 23. Jesus is keeping it. It is not called "the Passover of the Jews." It is called "***the*** Passover." A very clear distinction.

Leviticus 23:5-6 says that the 14th is the Passover, and that the lamb is to be slain "between the two evenings"—*ben ha arbayim*. Now *ben ha arbayim*, according to Exodus 16:12-13, clearly falls **after** *bar erev*—"the going down of the sun." The lambs were to be sacrificed immediately following the sunset of the 13th.

I go through this because we are going to go through something here that is among the more difficult scriptural problems in the New Testament. Let us turn to Matthew 26:17. Remember, we have the truth of the Old Testament to set us straight here. The lambs were to be slain immediately following *bar erev*—"the going down of the sun." They were to be slain during that period of time known as *ben ha arbayim*.

Matthew 26:17 Now on the first *day* of the *Feast of the Unleavened Bread* the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?

I want to draw your attention to the italicized words "day" and "of the feast," or "Feast of," depending on which translation you have. The use of an italicized word means that the translators have inserted these words into the translation in an effort to clarify the meaning. Sometimes it is helpful, sometimes it is not. This time it is **not**.

The disciples came and said, "Where do You want us to prepare. ..." The first day of Unleavened Bread was not on the 14th. The first day of Unleavened Bread is the 15th. Now if this was really the first day of Unleavened Bread, it sets up a very confusing unsolvable chronological problem in the Scriptures here, because these men are nearly two days late in asking for instructions regarding the keeping of the Passover. When should they have been asking this? Should it not have been sometime near, at the very

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latest, the going down of the sun on the 13th ? The lamb had to be slain at *ben ha arbayim*—after the going down of the sun on the 13th, which would then, in *ben ha arbayim*, have made it at the very beginning of the 14th. If this thing is properly translated, then these men are about two days late in asking this question.

To make matters worse, if this is translated properly, then Jesus would not have been crucified until when? On the afternoon of the 15th. That would have been sin. You and I would have no Savior, because the Savior had to be killed on the 14th in order for Him to be the true Passover Lamb.

There is still one more thing. Since we know that the religious leaders of the Jews kept their Passover one day later than Jesus, they would have killed their lambs on the afternoon of the 16th according to this chronology, and eaten it on the night of the 17th, which would have put it three days later (almost) than the way that God wanted it to be done. You see, none of these situations can possibly be true. Nothing transpired in this way. What we are dealing with here is an obvious mistranslation.

Mark 14:2 and Luke 22:7 have similar problems, but they are not quite as severe. If you ever do reading through commentaries on this section you are going to see that the commentators recognize that there is an obvious contradiction between John's account in the book of John and the three that they call "the synoptic Gospels."

Let me tell you that the problem is not with John. The problem is not with Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The problem is in the way that these verses were translated, because the truth is right there in the Scriptures, right in the verses. Unfortunately the translators did not recognize what they were dealing with.

If the Greek of Matthew 26:17 is translated into English just as it appears in the Greek, it would be translated in this way: "Now the first of the unleavens." Unleavens is plural. What does that mean? To you and me growing up in this culture, that means nothing. If we had been the translators, we may have inserted into that verse the same thing that the translators did, because they could not make sense of it. It cannot possibly mean what it says because of the way the translators translated it, because it sets up a situation that is irreconcilable.

Let us focus on it a little bit more specifically. The Greek words that are translated "the unleavens," is *toon azumoon*. It is the plural of *ta azuma*. *Ta azuma* means "the unleavened." Singular. *Toon azumoon* means "the unleavens." Plural. You will notice the word "bread" is not even there. It is something that is implied because it is bread that is unleavened.

In the plural, *toon azumoon*—"the unleavens"—may reflect more than just bread alone. I will warn you this is what we are dealing with. *Toon azumoon*, "the unleavens," may reflect more than just bread alone. I will say here that perhaps it is very likely that it has been pluralized here by Matthew, Mark, and Luke to reflect more than bread. In this case it could indicate days—days that were unleavened—or things other than bread. So in the plural, *toon azumoon* may reflect days, bread, houses, a nation, and people who are unleavened in a spiritual sense.

Exodus 12:15, 19 tells us what had to be unleavened.

Exodus 12:15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

Exodus 12:19 For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.

This is what we get out of the sum of those verses. The Hebrew in those verses, especially in verse 15, is written in the past tense, showing an action that had been completed in the past. It is talking about getting the leaven out. What did they have to get the leaven out of? They had to get the leaven out of the bread. They had to get the leaven out of their houses. They had to get the leaven, as the *King James* says, out of their borders. In order to do that, did it not require a great deal of preparation in order to get prepared for the keeping of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Any of us who is honestly trying to get the leaven out would begin quite early cleaning out the closets, especially the things that are in the kitchen. In the case of my wife, she begins early so that she does not have a great deal of preparatory work when we are coming down to the last day or so before the actual keeping of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The *Mishna* comes in handy here again, because they give us a description of what was required of those people at that time in regard to cleaning up (or what we would call "de-leavening") themselves, their houses, their borders. I am going to give you a quote from a source that is available to almost anybody. It is from *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, which is one of the more common dictionaries of people who are studying into the Bible. The quote is under the article *Festivals*, page 354. We're talking here about the 13th of Nisan.

Listen to this carefully.

On the evening of the 13th Nisan, which, until that of the 14th, was called the "preparation for the Passover" (John 19:14), every head of a family searched for and collected by the light of a candle all the leaven. Before beginning the search, he pronounced the following benediction: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and hast enjoined us to remove the leaven." After the search he said, "Whatever leaven remains in my possession which I cannot see, behold, it is null, and accounted as the dust of the earth."

The source of this was undoubtedly the *Mishna*. The reference given in Unger's to John 19:14 shows very clearly that the author of *Unger's Bible Commentary* **knows** what the Scriptural reference is to the preparation of the Passover.

The Mishna goes on to say that they burned the leaven by 10 am (the 13th). No one was allowed to eat leaven after 11 am. The unleavened bread was baked and ready for the Passover by 3 pm.

When we consider their preparations for Passover and Unleavened Bread, we can understand then why Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote as they did and called that day that they were writing about "the *first* of the unleavens." That is, the 13th day was the first day of the year when leaven was required to be put out.

Remember, we are talking about the day leading up to the killing of the lamb, because everything to them had to be prepared and ready for the roasting and eating of the lamb as soon as it was killed, and this was the case in Jesus' last Passover.

Let us go now to Matthew 26:17, and I am going to give you a **paraphrase** in which I inject the words. I insert them, and I think that it will be more understandable.

"Now, on the first day of the year requiring unleavened houses and unleavened bread in preparation for the Passover, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?' "

They are talking about the 13th day of the first month. Now that clears up the chronological problem.

Let us go to Luke 22:7. Remember, what we are looking at here is a tradition of those people. It is not something that God required, but it was a tradition of those people. It was the first day of unleaven. Not "Unleavened Bread," but simply the first day that they were to be unleavened.

Luke 22:7 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.

What Luke adds here is the definite article "**the**." "Then came **the** day of the unleavens." I am going to paraphrase this for you. "And came **the** day of the unleavens in which it was obligatory for the Passover to be killed."

I inserted the word "obligatory" because the Greek there is very strong. It was mandatory. It implies *under the compulsion of law*. It is telling us that the killing of the Passover lamb was required by compulsion of God's law to be killed at a certain time, and that certain time was *ben ha arbayim*—between the two evenings—at the beginning of the 14th.

Also he is telling us that "the day of unleavens" included part of the 14th, because preparations for Unleavened Bread continued after the 14th had arrived.

Was Jesus' last meal just a supper, or was it a Passover? Was it just some kind of a commemorative meal? There are those who keep the Passover on the 15th, and they say that Jesus' last meal was "the last supper," and that this was some pre-Passover commemorative meal that He kept. There are others who claim that Jesus' keeping of the Passover at the beginning of the 14th was something entirely new, because the Jews had always kept it at the end of the 14th and on into the 15th.

Understand this: these people have to make these claims, because if Jesus *did* keep it at the beginning of the 14th, it destroys much of their authority for a late 14th afternoon Passover. It is just another attempt of Satan to bury God's truth under an avalanche of spurious and convoluted arguments. But the truth of God is always there, and it will prevail.

Let us look at Mark 14:12. This one is a bombshell.

Mark 14:12 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?

Here we have to look into the Greek again. The word that is translated "they killed" is in the Greek *ethuon*. It is third person plural, imperfect active indicative. Now I will untangle that for you. It indicates an action in progress; one that is not yet completed; one that is taking place, and **they** are doing it.

I will read this to you from *Barclay's Commentary* on Mark 14:12, the way Barclay has translated it into modern English.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they were sacrificing the Passover lamb, ...

Did you catch it there? Brethren, when this happened **the killing of the lambs was going on!** That is a bombshell! Now we have to ask the question: Who were **they**? It could not possibly be the priests at the Temple, because the book of John shows very clearly that the priests, even the next morning, had not yet sacrificed the Passover lamb. They did not want to go into Pilate "lest they be defiled," and could not eat the Passover.

The sacrificing of the **home**-killed sacrifice—the domestic-killed sacrifices—was going on at the very time the disciples asked this question. I will tell you, that is a bombshell which shows that the people out in the public were not having their lambs sacrificed at the Temple. They were doing it themselves, and they were doing it at home, or they were doing it at the inns. They were doing it themselves, and they were doing it at the beginning of the 14th.

If you were a disciple of Jesus, and you **saw** this occurring right before your eyes, would you not ask the question that they did? It is so interesting that Jesus did not say, "Well, let's wait till tomorrow afternoon. After all, the late 14th is the right time to do it." There is no indication at all in all three of these accounts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that what they asked was any different from what they had already been practicing the years that they were with Jesus.

They **expected** to keep the Passover at the beginning of the 14th, and they were wondering, "When are we going to do it? It's getting late." But the account shows that Jesus had already made plans, and so He told them, "Go into such and such a city. You will see a certain person. Follow that person home. Ask the master of the house about his upper room there, and we will keep the Passover in the room that has been prepared."

Now Jesus said, "I will eat the Passover with My disciples," ...and it was "**THE** Passover," not "the Passover of the Jews." He did not eat "a last supper" the way some of these churches say it. It was a supper, but it was "**the** Passover" supper. It was not just some kind of commemorative meal. The directions and instructions are very clearly given there.

Do you know that in these three accounts the term "**the** Passover" is mentioned eleven times, and the word "house" is mentioned three times, and that the word "Temple" never comes up, and the words "Temple-killed lamb" never appear at all?

From these accounts there is no way of telling whether the disciples' preparation included killing the lamb. I would have to say, that because of the evidence given, that Jesus had already made preparations. He knew where to go, and the master of the house was expecting that He would be there. It is entirely likely that the master of the house had already slain the lamb by the time the disciples got there, and maybe even the lamb was in the process of being roasted so that when Jesus arrived there with His disciples there was little or no delay before the actual Passover meal began.

You will recall that a number of sermons ago I gave you a pretty good estimate of how long it would take to roast a lamb. The figures that I gave you were for a lamb that would weigh about 60 to 65 pounds, and it would take up to about midnight for that to occur. However, Leviticus 22:27 tells us that the lamb could be as young as eight days old. So if they used a very small lamb, it's entirely possible that it would only have taken about one hour for that lamb to have been roasted.

That fits beautifully into the time constraints that are given in John 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. The meal would not have taken any more than about two hours for Jesus to wash their feet, eat the Passover meal, institute the new symbols of the Passover, and then begin the instruction that He gave to His disciples there at the end of John 13, on into John 14 and through John 17.

Luke 22:16 For I say to you, I will no longer eat of it [the Passover] until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

There is absolutely no indication in Scripture that Jesus kept any other Passover day than the one God commanded in Exodus 12. There can be no doubt, from John 18 and 19, that two distinct Passovers were being kept: one by the leadership, and the other, by what we will call, "the common people," and that the Jews had not even eaten theirth

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Passover while Jesus was on trial for His life on the morning of the 14 .

I think that this ought to have cleared up quite a number of questions regarding the Passover in the New Testament.