

Deuteronomy 16, Passover, And The Night To Be Much Observed

Deuteronomy 16, Passover, and the Days of Unleavened Bread

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Given 10-Feb-07; Sermon #813s

I'm going to be giving more scriptures than I normally would give in a sermonette. I would like you to make sure when you're taking notes that you get the scriptures down so that you can go through them later and prove for your own good, for your own selves, what I'm going through here.

The title of this sermonette is, "Deuteronomy 16, Passover, and the Night to be Much Observed." Passover is approaching—it's only about seven weeks away now—and of course, with that, the Night to be Much Observed and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

This sermonette is going to focus on one aspect of the Night to be Much Observed. This celebration has quite a history. At one time in the past it was derisively called "Armstrong's folly" or "Armstrong's pipe dream." This was done because people felt that there was no biblical support for our observing it. Actually, though, there is a great deal of support, so much so that it deserves an entire sermon to more fully cover all that is in the Bible concerning it. However, I'm going to explain one area critical to the application of this day to us. So I want you to turn to Deuteronomy 16 and we are going to read the first eight verses:

Deuteronomy 16:1-8 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name. You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for

seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning. You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.

As we begin, I want us to note one often overlooked fact. That is, Leviticus 23 assigns Passover as the first of seven related but distinct festivals. The first 17 verses of this chapter (Deuteronomy 16) specifically apply to the keeping of three of those festivals: Unleavened bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, in which the Israelite males were required to go to the place where God had placed His name—those three feasts. Passover is a separate festival. It was to be observed in one's home, making it clearly distinct from the other seven.

As we shall see, the term Passover in verse 1 is out of place. It does not fit the chapter's context. I want you to notice also that it does not say "Jerusalem" in verse 16, where it says, "Where God has placed His name. Now, "where God placed His name" is generally considered where the Tabernacle, or later the Temple, was located. Actually, history shows the statement to be much more open-ended. The place could be anywhere in the nation. In actual practice, the application is even broader still. It could be many places.

First consider the context, the time setting, of the book of Deuteronomy. It was written before they ever went into the land. And so Israel was contained in a compact group of a couple of million people. As they settled into the land, they became scattered and the population grew to the point where getting to the Tabernacle or Temple where it sat actually, physically, became impossible for much of the population. Recall that Exodus 12 requires

Passover to be observed at home. Thus, following Passover, once they did that—they were still at home—they had to walk to the location mentioned in verse 16.

Well, eventually the synagogue system came into use and the synagogue became "the place where God put His name" locally. In 70 AD, the Temple was destroyed, and the Israelites were scattered worldwide. They could not carry the local synagogue with them and rapid communication was impossible. Thus, the "where God has placed his name" principle came to be applied wherever there are concentrations of people on which God has placed His name.

That is where the church stands today. The Israel of God carries His name.

Now, Deuteronomy 16:1-8 is a key section of scriptures of those advocating an Abib or Nissan 15 Passover because of all mentions there of Passover. Once some clarifications are made through a bit of detective work, it becomes clear that God means exactly what He said when He assigned Passover to Abib 14. An Abib 15 Passover is impossible given what the Scripture says.

The first needed clarification is to Deuteronomy 16:1, but it will be explained more fully as we go along. It involves the term, "Passover." It is misleading to say the least. It may be a mere copyist's error, a gloss as commentators call it. But let's hope that it was not deliberately inserted. It may have been. I do not know. How it got there is a mystery. But as you shall gather from the instruction following, the instructions here in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 do not apply to Passover observation in the least. The instructions here are for the Days of Unleavened Bread, and most specifically the Night to be Much Observed. We'll see that a little bit later.

In verse two, notice the word, "herd": "You shall therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord your God of the flock *and the herd*." That too is in error in terms of Passover.

Exodus 12:3-5 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if

the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

"Herd" in Deuteronomy 16:2 is a term that applies to cattle. "Flock" applies to sheep and the goats. Jesus is nowhere called "the Calf of God." Other sacrifices permitted cattle offerings, but not the Passover sacrifice. Strike one against this chapter being about Passover.

Next—same verse—the sacrifice of verse 2 was to be sacrificed where God had placed His name. Now, in time context, it indicates the Temple or the Tabernacle where He placed His name. That is what it would generally indicate.

Exodus 12:6-7 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the *houses* [not the place where God had put his name, their own home] where they eat it.

Passover was to be done at home. Strike two. Deuteronomy 16:2 has two instructions that do not apply to Passover. Thus, the instruction for the sacrifice in verse 2 applies to something else other than Passover, or we have an unacceptable contradiction.

Deuteronomy 16:3-6 You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning. You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; but at the place where the

LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt.

The first thing to notice here is that the instruction mentions unleavened bread in relationship with coming out of Egypt. In fact, the phrase specifically says, "You shall remember the *day* you came forth out of Egypt." Israel did not leave on the 14th day—Passover.

Numbers 33 marks the beginning of the Israelites' journeys:

Numbers 33:3 They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth [not the 14th. the 15th. Passover is the 14th. The first day of unleavened bread is the 15th] day of the first month; on the *day after* the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.

Strike three. If they are to remember the day regarding this sacrifice, it's not the Passover. The day they left Egypt was the 15th. Passover is the 14th.

Exodus 12:21-22 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.

Do you see what that says? After killing the lamb, dashing its blood upon the doorposts and then roasting the lamb, the Israelites were specifically warned to remain in their houses until morning. This sets up a physical impossibility for the 15th Passover folks. One cannot remain in one's house on the 14th and flee Egypt on exactly the same day.

In addition, Exodus 12:15-20 and Leviticus 23:6 together specifically assign unleavened bread to be eaten beginning on the 15th, the day after Passover, and continuing seven days until the 21st. The Passover is concluded.

In addition, the particular sacrifice in question in Deuteronomy 16, as stipulated in verse 5, is not to be sacrificed at home. Strike four: The Passover sacrifice is.

It's becoming pretty obvious that the sacrifice of Deuteronomy 16 is not the Passover lamb sacrifice. Verse 7 adds another proof:

Deuteronomy 16:7 And you shall roast and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents.

This verse seems to give strength to a Passover sacrifice. However, the Hebrew word for roast is *tsacah* (*Strong's* #6748). It is indeed used in Exodus 12:8 as instruction for Passover. The Passover lamb was to be roasted, and the Israelites are specifically warned in Exodus 12:9 *not* to eat the Passover lamb either raw or boiled. However, the word used here in Deuteronomy 16:7 is *not* the word for roast. It is the Hebrew word for boil (*bashal*; *Strong's* #1310). It always means "to boil" or "to seethe." Strike five.

Finally, there is a conjunction between verse 4 and verse 8. Note in verse 4 the mention of "the first day": ". . . which you sacrificed the first day at even." Now look at verse 8: "Six days shall you eat unleavened bread . . ." Hey, I thought that we were supposed to eat unleavened bread for *seven* days. Absolutely. But when you add "the first day" to six, you come up with seven. He means there, "six more days after this sacrifice is made, you are to eat unleavened bread." It is clearly referring to the seven Days of Unleavened Bread.

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are separate festivals. Adding Passover to Unleavened Bread would make the total eight days. Passover is *not* a Day of Unleavened Bread, even though unleavened bread was required for use with the Passover lamb offering.

I'm going to give you a summary—six strikes against them. They struck out twice here.

- 1) At the very least, the insertion of Passover in verse 1 is a scribe's careless but honest error, resulting from what people then generally

called the entire spring holy day season. They called the whole thing "Passover," even as today we call the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day, "Tabernacles." We refer to them both with one name.

2) The Passover sacrifice was restricted to a year-old lamb or goat. This sacrifice in Deuteronomy 16 has no restriction regarding the age of the sacrifice.

3) The instruction pertains to the observance of the day Israel left Egypt—the 15th. Verse 4 even mentions the night and morning of the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

4) The sacrifice of Deuteronomy 16 was not permitted to be made at home. Passover was commanded to be made at home.

5) The sacrifice of this chapter was permitted to be boiled. The Passover sacrifice could only be roasted.

6) The entire period covered by this instruction in Deuteronomy 16 is seven days, not one as in the case of Passover.

So there you have it. Deuteronomy 16 applies to the Days of Unleavened Bread, not Passover. And it most specifically applies to the Night to be Much Observed and the meal that is eaten on that night.