

## Why We Observe Passover And The Days Of Unleavened Bread

Putting the Focus Back on God

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As we begin, I want us to understand that this sermon is about the relationship between God and us and salvation.

Are we sure that we are observing the Days of Unleavened Bread for the right reason? Is it possible that we have been observing the Days of Unleavened Bread these many years, and yet all the while overlooking, perhaps even entirely, a major reason why God Himself *directly* says that we should keep them?

Are you aware that nowhere in Scripture does God state, "I want you to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread because these seven days represent the period of time between your calling and the Kingdom of God in which you are to grow and overcome"? That reason is a conclusion. It is a correct one, but it is gathered from bits and pieces of information scattered throughout the Scriptures. There is nothing wrong with that thought at all, but there are several places that God actually said, "I want you to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread because . . ." and brethren, I think that for the most part we have not been doing what He said.

This is not anything new. You are going to recognize it right away, but it is something we hardly ever mention, and maybe it never even comes to mind. Maybe we have read over it so frequently, we know it is there, but we take it for granted. Richard mentioned it several times in his sermon this morning, but he did not put the emphasis on it that I am going to be putting on here. It is an emphasis I want us to remember. I want to make sure that we make it a working part of our spiritual life—our relationship with God—because it needs to be there.

**Exodus 12:14** And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.

That is not it. It is very easy to respond by saying, to my original question, that we keep them because God commands them. That is not wrong. It is just not specific, because

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He does command, but we have not hit the nail on the head yet. This statement is probably the first of any fairly specific answer we might give. We keep the Days of Unleavened Bread because they are a memorial of when Israel came out of Egypt.

Memorials are kept to remind us of something significant in our past. That is most assuredly the right answer, but that reason is primarily given to the ancient nation of Israel. Although it also applies to us spiritually, because we are their descendants, it still is not the whole story.

Now it is 3500 years later, and because we are part of the spiritual organism, we might say that the Days of Unleavened Bread are kept to remind us that we came out of the world; thus we keep them to be on our guard lest we slip back into the world. This is getting much closer to the reason I am thinking of, but it is still somewhat negative. A more positive response is that through them we are urged to overcome and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The eating of unleavened bread reminds us that there is a sense of urgency to our lives. There is no time to waste in becoming sinless and holy in our life.

God indeed does tell us to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread as a memorial, but that is not the only reason He tells us to observe them. The other reason that I am about to show you will, in the overall sense, be the one that will ultimately have the most significant impact on us regarding what we will accomplish in our calling.

**Exodus 13:1-2** And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

The setting apart of the firstborn was to serve as an additional reminder that God spared Israel's firstborn when He passed over them instead of striking them dead. He did strike dead the Egyptian's firstborn. As we continue to move through this chapter, let us notice what God Himself emphasizes.

The sanctification of the firstborn was a constant day-to-day reminder, not merely an annual reminder of what God did. I will tell you something that happened to me. When I was born, I was a firstborn, and I just happened to be born in a duplex house. My parents lived on one side, and my grandparents lived on the other side. I had a very religious grandmother, and when I was born a firstborn, my religious grandmother said to my mother, "He's a firstborn. He's to be sanctified unto the Lord." I do not know

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whether my mother ever did that. She was not religious like my grandmother, but I was told later on when I was an adult that this had taken place. I had no idea all those years I spent not knowing that I had that special thing conferred on me by my grandmother. Maybe she set me apart. I do not know.

**Exodus 13:3** And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

This is the first of many statements, as we go through here, why He wants us to keep the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. I will tell you right out. You are to keep them because of what the LORD did. That is never to be forgotten.

**Exodus 13:8-9, 11** And thou shall show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto you upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth: for with a strong hand has the LORD brought you out of Egypt. . . . And it shall be when the LORD shall bring you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore unto you and to your fathers, and shall give it you, . . .

Now He is looking forward. "I brought you out, and I am going to bring you in."

**Exodus 13:14** And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What is this? That you shall say unto him, by strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:

**Exodus 13:16** And it shall be for a token upon your hand, and for frontlets between your eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.

**Exodus 13:18** But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed [that is, in an orderly fashion] out of the land of Egypt.

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Let us go back again to Exodus 12 again. I specifically left this verse out because I did not want to tip my hand. We will see it right in verse 17.

**Exodus 12:17** And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever.

The point of all this is that God Himself says that we are to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread and the things related to it as a memorial of what *He* did. This appears to me to be the primary reason for us to observe them. However, it is not the reason most of us have in mind when we keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. Our minds and our sermons have been almost exclusively on what we are to do as symbolized by the leaven, by the seven days and so forth—things like coming out of the world, growing, and overcoming.

These indeed, brethren, are important, but we must fully understand ever so deeply that those things are an effect of what *God* did. Therefore, what God does is of primary importance during Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. If He did not do what He does, we would never, never, *never* accomplish what He wants *us* to do. So this focus on Him sets the stage for the entire observance of *all* of the holy days of the entire plan of salvation. This is what gets Passover started, the Days of Unleavened Bread started, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day. What God does starts everything in motion.

As we rehearse the festivals every year, we go right back to the beginning and give appropriate focus on what is the generator of all these things. It is He that opens the way and then enables us. He provides whatever it is we need to accomplish what *He* desires of us. In order that we may understand this point, I am going to back up in time and take us back to the events that led up to Israel's escape from Egyptian slavery.

In one sense one might say that their total contribution appears to have been to kill a lamb, dash their doorposts with the blood, stay in their homes overnight, and then walk away. That is a great simplification, but nonetheless that is what occurred. Now as a spiritual parallel to us, how much do we do to contribute to the means of our forgiveness for sin? Do you see the vast difference between what God does and what *we* do?

Did we have to give up our life? No. Are you beginning to see why the focus has to be

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on what God does, and how out of proportion what He does is compared to what we do? Yet we honestly think that what we do is difficult, and it is. You see, for us it is. I am not denigrating all the efforts we have to put in, and all the sacrificing we have to do. I am not denigrating that at all, but what God does is far greater in proportion to what we do. Our participation actually is pretty much limited to thoroughly studying into the circumstances of our life, and God's offer of forgiveness, and then believing, and professing our guilt. Our participation is almost entirely a mental exercise, and thus we observe it only because of what the Lord did.

Perhaps quantitatively we have done even less than what the Israelites had to do.

**Exodus 8:20-23** And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he comes forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus says the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon you, and upon your servants, and upon your people, and into your houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and your people: tomorrow shall this sign be.

God makes a difference. This will become a large portion of what I am going to be saying in this sermon. God is making a difference between His people and those who are part of the world.

**Exodus 9:20-23** He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

**Exodus 11:4-7** And Moses said, Thus says the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall

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die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that you may know how that the LOORD does put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

It is the Lord doing these things. Those three sections of verses I read specifically because I want you to see not only did the Lord do these things, but He also emphasizes the fact that He put a distinct difference between what happened to one group of people and what happened to another group of people.

**Exodus 11:9-10** And the LOORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LOORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

In almost every calling there is resistance from Satan, of which Pharaoh is a type. What we are seeing here is resistance from the Pharaoh to those upon whom God has put a difference. In other words, He is calling them out.

**Exodus 12:35-36** And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LOORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

Even as there is resistance from Satan, from Pharaoh, I hope you will understand that as God worked with the Israelites He also works with us. In almost every case, as we are being called out of the world, we begin to run into resistance as we begin to believe what God says. But at the same time, if we will recognize it, and usually we do not recognize it until later on, actually God has been doing battle for us. Even though He put a resistance before us, He also gave us the strength to go on. He also gave us favor at times just like He did for the Israelites so that they were able to do what they did.

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**Exodus 12:51** And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LOORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

This verse attributes Israel's release, and thus ours too spiritually, entirely to God. All Israel had to do was to choose to leave and to literally walk out. But even here God made the choice fairly easy by painting such an attractive picture of the future that they could hardly resist. The same principle happens to us.

**Exodus 13:21-22** And the LOORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

He is still there. He is leading and guiding, but they still are not out from an area of Egyptian rule. God establishes a pattern by going before them by day and night and leading the way and providing protection. In our calling, we may not be as aware as Israel was because He gave them visible evidence of His nearness, but you can be sure that He is every bit as close to us, overseeing our lives, as He was to the Israelites. We are exceedingly more precious to Him than the Israelites were at this time. He is there! Is that not what Abraham said? That was one of the results of the near sacrifice of Isaac, and when that occurred, Abraham named that place, "Yahweh is here," or "Yahweh is there."

**Exodus 14:4** And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LOORD. And they did so.

**Exodus 14:8** And the LOORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

Now we find that they are trapped.

**Exodus 14:13-18** And Moses said unto the people, Fear you not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LOORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall see them again no more

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forever. The LOORD shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace. And the LOORD said unto Moses, Wherefore cry you unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift you up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LOORD, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

Really, that is not going to happen until the second resurrection. They are going to come up in that resurrection and they are going to know "Israel's God *is* God!"

**Exodus 14:24-25** And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LOORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LOORD fights for them against the Egyptians.

**Exodus 14:31** And Israel saw that great work which the LOORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LOORD, and believed the LOORD, and his servant Moses.

God is showing us and establishing for you and me a pattern, that even before we begin to move, as it were, on the calling that He gives, He is with us all the way. He never leaves us. Sure, we have to make choices seemingly on our own, but He is always there.

God deliberately caused events to occur as they were leaving, that on the surface made their departure more difficult. However, they would later understand this was done that they might honor and bless Him by living by faith. No doubt there were times of discomfort for them, and even times of great anxiety for the Israelites, but by any fair comparison, virtually all they had to do in the end was to kill the lamb, splash the blood, and then walk away from their cruel, restraining slavery.

I am going to read through part of Exodus the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter. Remember, Exodus 15 is a celebration of what they just experienced, and I want you to pay attention to what Moses



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said.

**Exodus 15:1-14** Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LOORD, and spoke, saying, I will sing unto the LOORD, for he has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has he thrown into the sea. The LOORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LOORD is a man of war: the LOORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host has he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Your right hand, O LOORD, is become glorious in power: your right hand, O LOORD, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of your excellency you have overthrown them that rose up against you: you sent forth your wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. You did blow with your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto you, O LOORD, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in your mercy have led forth the people, which you have redeemed: you have guided them in your strength unto your holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine.

And on and on it goes as Moses attributes everything positive that happened to God.

I have a question for you that each one of us needs to answer. Do we do what Moses did? I am sure that we do not match Moses in the eloquence of the things that he stated there, but surely, in our own simple and comparatively uneducated way, do we not believe that God does the same things for us? I will tell you brethren, it means a great deal as to whether or not we are going to overcome and grow, because where are we going to turn for help at all times? Can anybody begin to match God?

Let us go to Deuteronomy 6. Understand that this was written 40 years later. They are on the brink of going into the Promised Land. In this case I want you to apply this to yourself.

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**Deuteronomy 6:20** And when your son asks you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the LOORD our God has commanded you?

I might interject here that it is in Deuteronomy 5 that the Ten Commandments are repeated, so that is why it says this about the testimonies and so forth. It is an expansion upon what we saw there in the book of Exodus.

**Deuteronomy 6:21-24** Then you shall you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LOORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LOORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the LOORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LOORD our God for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

Think of that in terms of eternal life. Think of that in terms of everlasting life. Why does God release us from our bondage to Satan? *"That He might preserve us alive!"* Everything God does in our behalf, whether He puts barriers in our way through other people, whether He opens ways, whether He divides the sea, or whatever it is, everything He does is pointed in a specific direction. That direction is toward the Kingdom of God, and bringing us into His family. Everything is pointed in that way. Do you think we are not precious to Him? He is going to do everything in His power to protect us. He will fight for us in ways that only He can. The emphasis in the first two festivals is definitely on Him.

Let us begin to apply these types more directly to the Christian experience. We are going to shift out of the Old Testament and into the New Testament spiritual reality. The supreme importance here is the thing we started with in the book of Exodus. "The Lord makes a difference" because everything kind of hinges on that thought.

We are going to go first to Romans 10 to get just a couple simple principles and examples.

**Romans 10:12-13** For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For

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whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The world separates these two verses from their context, and then declares that salvation is open to anyone who calls on the name of the Lord. But brethren, I want you to add to this a scripture we all know very well, and that is John 6:44 which says that no one can come to Christ except the spirit of the Father draws him. God means exactly what He says. No one!

Without being called, people can volunteer to serve God on the basis of their intellect, and perhaps even with very admirable attitudes. They can do it all they want, but unless God's plan also includes them, they are going to have to wait until they fit into God's purpose for them later. Their volunteering does not impress Him because they cannot truly live by faith in Him. Without revealing Himself in a calling, they do not know Him. It is a simple, simple principle. So what they choose to do in their volunteerism is fraught with idolatry because they are operating on the basis of their own conception.

Do you get the point? Unless God calls, and unless God reveals Himself in that calling, all the intellect in the world, and all those admirable attitudes those people have, which are not wasted, do not help them at this time.

**Romans 9:9-13** For this is the word of promise, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calls, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

**Romans 9:15-16** For he said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

Like God did with Egypt and with Israel, He put a difference between them. He sanctified the Israelitish people. That is something only He can do, and He does the same with each and every one of you. You are sanctified. A difference is created in His mind between you and the person who is right next to you. The illustration Paul uses is

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that Esau and Jacob were twins, but God separated Jacob away from Esau. You cannot get a relationship any closer than that. God made the difference. So this pattern remains to this day.

God chose to call Abraham and to work through his family—through Isaac, then through Jacob, through Joseph, and through Judah, and so forth. God does all this right from the beginning of our calling with Him. Salvation and all that it entails in the way of gifts and intervention is provided by God who is working in the called's behalf, whether Israelite or Gentile, for the completion of *His* purposes. It is God who sanctifies His people. He separates them from others. He is sovereign over His purpose.

**Romans 10:11** For the scripture says, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

This is a true statement, but again the world uses this statement wrong, and so it needs to be qualified for right understanding regarding those who volunteer to serve God.

**Ephesians 2:8** For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

One of the greatest of all gifts that God provides His called-out ones is the gift of faith. We just read about faith in Romans 10:11. The faith that saves is that gift of God. It is frequently in the Scripture called *the* faith in order to separate it from any kind of faith that any person is able to have. *The* faith is a specific aspect of God's grace. It is one of the major gifts of God's grace.

So to believe so as not to be ashamed requires living faith, and the volunteers do not have that as evidenced by the fact that they really do not obey Him. How many people that you know, who volunteer to serve God, keep the Sabbath? For all of their intelligence, for all of their good attitudes, they just cannot see it. That is the difference God makes between the ones He calls. It is not always the Sabbath, but that is the commandment that is most easily seen by us, and God Himself says that the Sabbath is the sign.

It is God's calling that makes the difference. God is in charge, and He is in complete command of whom He calls. Nobody is going to volunteer to serve Him. He is going to use them only if it fits in with His purpose. God is sovereign. Boy, He demonstrated that

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to the Egyptians!

This, which I just pointed out about the Sabbath, makes it abundantly clear. It is only those called into the church who can take advantage of what God offered. They obey so that they will not be ashamed.

We are now going to go to Matthew 2. This is a less important aspect here, but still nonetheless it is good to have it in your mind to see how closely these parallels fit into this principle, and why it has to be that the focus of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread is on God.

**Matthew 2:14-15** When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young child and his mother [Mary] by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

That was something specifically executed by God just to fulfill a scripture. Right after Jesus was born there was a hindrance thrown in the path so that Herod could kill Him, but of course he did not. They fled into Egypt. The verses in this context then specifically apply to Him.

**Hosea 11:1** When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

We have gone back in time pretty far, but now we see where Matthew 2 came from. It came out of Hosea. In Matthew it was applied to Christ. Now it is applied here to Israel, and Israel is called "My son." Believe it or not, that was copied from somewhere else. We are going to go back into the book of Exodus again.

**Exodus 4:21-22** And the LORD said unto Moses, When you go to return into Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. And you shall say unto Pharaoh, Thus says the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.

Now Israel is not only His son, but he is also God's firstborn in this context.

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In one sense all of Israel, in a spiritual way, is a type of Christ, but in certain contexts the imagery shifts. When it does, Israel becomes a type of the church of God. God called Israel out of Egypt. God calls the church out of this world, and Egypt is a type of this world. God calls the church "the Israel of God." You see how all these things are fitting together. What we are seeing here is how all of this comes together about why we celebrate the Days of Unleavened Bread, about coming out of sin.

In Galatians 6:16 the church is called "the Israel of God." This shows us there is another Israel that is *not* of God. One is *of* God; the other is *not* of God.

We are going to go back again to Romans 9. Paul covered some powerful stuff there in Romans 9, 10, and 11. In Romans 9:6-8 he is talking about the Israelitish people. He is talking about the nation of Israel in existence in his time.

**Romans 9:6-8** Not as though the word of God has taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: [You can see what he is pointing to. There is an Israel that is of God, and there is an Israel that is not of God.] Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

We have taken another step here. It is very easy for us in our mind's eye to separate the Israelites from the Gentiles. God has in His calling separated Israelites away from Israelites so that when the church is in the process of being formed there are two Israels—two distinct Israels. God is the One who has made the difference.

I am heading to something here that is important to us understanding why God has to be the One who receives the focus in Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Remember, the book of Ephesians was written to Gentiles.

**Ephesians 2:11-13** Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: [He is pointing out the differences even between unconverted people.]

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But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

We will not go through everything Paul says here, but it is important because the strong inference in this, especially in the last half of this chapter, beginning in verse 11, is that God's calling of the Gentiles into His family through Jesus Christ, translates them within Israel. Now to a Gentile in a Gentile land, that is a major, major difference because they become, as Paul explains in Romans 3, spiritual Jews.

How many times have you been called a Jew, or that it has been implied? You buy matzos, and they say, "Oh, I didn't know you were a Jew." Well, you are not. But you are a *spiritual* Jew. They see something that associates you with Judaism. That is the kind of thing Paul is talking about here. But a Gentile, in a Gentile land who begins doing, believing, and practicing things like a Jew, sticks out like a sore thumb! But this is the Lord's doing, and it is wisdom in His sight to do it that way. So to a Gentile in a Gentile land, becoming a spiritual Jew is extremely important, because only those who are part of the Israel belonging to God are going to completely escape from this world to be saved. This is something in a way that happens rapidly. They go from being a Gentile, to being an Israelite, to being part of "the Israel of God." It is God who is making the difference in all of these things.

We can draw this even further. In I John 3:1-3 we become children of God. In James 1:17-18 we are distinguished there as being "a kind of firstfruits." Let me remind you again that all of this comes to us because of what God does, and He is working everything according to His purpose.

**Revelation 14:1** And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

I hope we can get a little bit of the feeling of what this means, because what he is picturing here is the resurrected church. We have the Father's name—His surname, as it were—written in our foreheads. It is in our mind.

**Revelation 14:2-4** And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the

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throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

The Israel of God consists of the firstfruits of His spiritual creation.

Just a moment's reflection: Just how much have we contributed to all of this? It is insignificant. There are two Israels. One is physical and unconverted. The other is spiritual and converted. God's promises and God's wonders are now working in behalf of the Israel of God. Do you understand that? All that God did to get Israel out of Egypt is merely a type of what He is now doing to get you and me into the Kingdom of God.

All that God did to get Israel across the wilderness and into the Promised Land He will now do for us. He supplied whatever they needed. He provided it all the way across, as illustrated by the manna, as illustrated by the water, as illustrated by the battles He fought for them, as illustrated by the dividing of the Red Sea, as illustrated by the dividing of the Jordan River in flood. Is there anything we are going to have to face that God cannot overcome? He will do it if by our lives we acknowledge that we are submissive to Him. That is our contribution to this.

**Hebrews 12:22-23** But you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

So here the church is called "the church of the firstborn." That phrase could mean "the church belonging to the firstborn—Christ." It could also mean "the church consisting of the firstborn." Within the parallel between ancient Israel and us, we have come full circle. We shall more clearly see the church, if not literally the firstborn, its members however are one with the Firstborn. We are going to show more of that, so specifically stated, as part of His body, and are clearly His spiritual firstfruits.

Let me rehearse very briefly what Romans 9 teaches us. Romans 9 emphasizes God's



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sovereignty in our calling and in our salvation. It is not of him who wills and then runs, but of God who is in charge. If He does not call a person, they will not be saved in this judgment. One cannot volunteer to be a part of God's family. That is sheer presumptuousness.

Romans 10 then emphasizes the called's responsibility. God is sovereign, but we have a responsibility. That chapter shows us we must seek God in order to be like Him, and if we do, we will be saved according to the same pattern established by the calling. God continues to work in and through them. Richard referred to this verse in Philippians 2:13 which says, "It is God who works in you, both to will and to do." This begins to get very interesting. Maybe another way of saying it is this: As in our calling, this is completely and totally at God's disposal, so also in sanctification, as represented by the Days of Unleavened Bread.

It is God who works in us both to will and to do. Brethren, He *must* have preeminence in our lives. That is what He emphasizes there right in the Exodus story, primarily in Exodus 12 and 13, and especially in Exodus 13. Everything there focuses on the fact of what *He* did. What He did is so significant compared to what the Israelites did. What the Israelites did is almost nothing. The same is true with us within the parallel. The Days of Unleavened Bread are pointing us to the fact that we must look to God for all things, especially relating to Passover and the forgiveness of sin. We must also look in all things pertaining to overcoming and growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In I Corinthians 15 Paul sums it up in this way, and he captures the essence of this.

**I Corinthians 15:28** And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

He is, in a sense, the entire show. We can look to Him, and we do look to Him in thanksgiving for His calling and His bringing us out of sin, and not merely removing the death penalty, but giving us the opportunity to have our life and destiny completely and totally changed to one that is positive and hopeful.

I am going to take you on a historical journey here that is important to this subject. I mean *very* important. We are going to go back to the book of Deuteronomy and we are going to pick up something that occurred there. We are specifically going to go to

chapter 12. I will give you a little bit of a lead-in to this.

The book of Deuteronomy was written by Moses in the last month or two before they went into the Land. This is a generality, but it is nonetheless true. In the first eleven chapters God reiterates to Israel in summary form all He has done for them from the time He called them out of Egypt. When you read through there you will see "I did this," "I did that," "I. . .I. . .I." And then finally in chapter 12 He makes a very sudden switch. "Okay. This is what I've done for you. Now this is what I want you to do for Me."

**Deuteronomy 12:1-3** These are the statutes and judgments, which you shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of your fathers gives you to possess it, all the days that you live upon the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which you shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And you shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

What does that sound like? That sounds like getting rid of all of our gods, brethren. "This is what I've done for you. I've brought you out. I've made you My son. Now, here's what I want from you. Get rid of those false gods."

**Deuteronomy 12:4-12** You shall not do so unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall you seek, and thither you shall come: And thither you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand unto, you and your households, wherein the LORD your God has blessed you. You shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For you are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God gives you. But when you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall you bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings,

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and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which you vow unto the LOORD: And you shall rejoice before the LOORD your God, you, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he has no part nor inheritance with you.

Do you know what God was doing here? This began when they were in the wilderness. It officially began when God gave Moses the plan for the Tabernacle, and then Moses and the Israelites built it. When the time came to erect it, they set it up, got everything ready, and the fire came down from God out of heaven and it lit the fire.

Whenever they were on the move they took the Tabernacle down. Wherever they were going to be camped, they put the Tabernacle back up again. I want you to see what God was beginning to establish. Basically, He was saying, "There's only one place in the nation of Israel that you can come and serve Me fully and completely, and that is where the Tabernacle is."

They went into the land. They were going to complete the process of the instructions given in Deuteronomy 12. It was not until Joshua 18 that the Tabernacle was located in Shiloh. They erected it and set it up there, and that became the place where God placed His name. The Tabernacle was there, the brazen altar was there, and so wherever it was, that was the only place in Israel where they were permitted to do any sacrificing. Later on David moved the Tabernacle to Jerusalem. A little bit later the next generation built the Temple, but the same structure of the relationship between the Israelites and God was that which was established in the wilderness, and then in Shiloh.

What God did beginning there in the wilderness, and then continuing through Deuteronomy 12, was to establish a national religion. But as you can begin to see, it was a pretty rigid structure. The Israelites—these unconverted people—were restricted by the very way of life and the religious part of that which He had established. It was not something that would induce a closeness like the kind of relationship that David had with God. It was entirely different.

Now we are going to jump about 1400 years, and we are going to go to the book of John, because one of the most significant changes in all of God's purpose is about to unfold before your eyes. Sometimes brethren, we may take this for granted.

**John 4:19-23** The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that you are a

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prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and you say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. [That is where the Temple was, so the woman was right on.] Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. [He is getting ready here to drop a spiritual bomb!] You worship you know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, [It is not established yet, but He is prophesying on it. It is off in the future a bit. And then He says] and now is [Why? Because *He* was there. And who was Jesus? He was "God with us."] when the true worshippers [Now it begins to involve the Israel of God. They are the true worshippers] shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him.

This was a major and even more significant relationship announcement than the Deuteronomy 12 one, and I am sure that the woman at the well did not understand. In effect, Jesus was saying that the Temple worship was to be abandoned and it was going to be replaced by a different relationship structure altogether. Now notice that He did not name a location nor say when this change would take place, but He did reveal the worship relationship must be in spirit and in truth. This becomes more understandable when other events take place later in Jesus' ministry, which we will launch into immediately. We are going to go all the way to the crucifixion area in John 15 where Jesus said something very, very significant, because "worshipping in spirit and truth" is just about ready to begin.

Brethren, this is to what you and I have been called to do. Our relationship with the Father is entirely different from what Israel had in Egypt. Our relationship with the Father is entirely different from what Israel had in the wilderness, and from what Israel had in ancient Israel that surrounded the Temple.

Maybe this will begin to become more significant now that we are seeing why God has to be at the beginning of our Sacred Year.

**John 15:5** I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.

Do you understand how significant that is? *Without Him we cannot do anything in terms of God's purpose. That is how important the relationship with Jesus Christ is. We cannot*

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allow this to be diminished in our mind. It is absolutely He who pays for our sins. He is working in and through us to produce the fruit during the sanctification period. What a major difference! This is the very theme running through all that we have covered so far. It is in reality the theme of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

This principle explains why God would accept no offering whatsoever from the Gentile. Do you know why? Because He was not in them. It is that simple. Another way of putting it would be this. They were not attached to the Vine. Do you know what this means in conclusion? I am going to read it to you. As far as God is concerned, theologically, spiritually, those people were totally corrupt. It is only God in us that makes the difference.

Turn with me now to Leviticus 22. To get a fuller picture we might read through the whole ten or fifteen verses, but I just want to go to verses 24 and 25.

**Leviticus 22:24-25** You shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall you make any offering thereof in your land. Neither from a stranger's hand [a Gentile] shall you offer the bread of your God [the food that went on the sacrificial altar] of any of these; because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: [As far as God is concerned, they were not holy. No difference had been made in their lives.] they shall not be accepted for you.

Brethren, God is exclusively the God of His people and nobody else—exclusively. From His point of view, and in God's purpose, God is always the innovator. God is the initiator of every good thing from His people. James said, "God is the Giver of every good and perfect gift." In God's form of things, progress always moves from the top down.

Do you know what at least one of the words that is translated into the word "walk" in the Old Testament literally means? It means, "follow." That is what we do. We follow God. We follow the Cloud. We follow the Pillar of Fire. And when we innovate, we cause trouble—(with a capital T)!

In John 14 Jesus tells us, like in eleven chapters in the book of Deuteronomy, what He will do for us. In John 15 He tells us what we must do for Him, and one of them is we must produce much fruit. It is not merely fruit, but *much fruit*. The major building block for accomplishing the production of much fruit—and at the same time worshipping God in spirit and in truth—is taught beginning in John 14:15-18. Maybe this section will be

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much more meaningful to you now.

**John 14:15-18** If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter [Remember, it is going to come from the top down.], that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

The word "Comforter" comes from the Greek *paraklete*, and *paraklete* literally means "one who goes alongside," and thus means an aid or a helper. Jesus then goes on to designate the Comforter as "the Spirit of truth." This fits right into the context because in verse 6 Jesus designates Himself as "the way, the truth, and the life." In other words, Jesus was the living embodiment of God's way, God's truth, and God's life.

He takes this description of the Spirit one step further in verse 17, and He does this by declaring, "it already dwells with you." That covers the past and the present, "and shall in the future be in you." Then in verse 18 He says, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." In verse 18 He removes any remaining shadow of doubt concerning what He is talking about when He emphatically says, "I will come to you." Do you know what He is saying there, brethren? "I am that Spirit." It is not a third person in some kind of a supposed trinity. It is Jesus Christ Himself!

I do not know how He can make it any clearer. This is why He can say, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am living in you."

The Israelites had to worship God before a temple. It was like looking at a brick wall. Our God *lives* in us! You cannot get a relationship any closer than that. This is why it says, "Anything that is built, I have done it."

He makes it even more emphatic in verse 20.

**John 14:20-23** At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas said unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my

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words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

So it is not only the Son, it is also the Father. It is getting rather crowded there, is it not? However, I think you get the point.

Brethren, this is how worshipping God in spirit and in truth becomes a reality. He is in us, not the third person in a trinity. It is the Father and the Son in us. Jesus kept saying the same things one way and another so that we get the picture. He said, "The Father does the works. I'm not doing this. The Father does it."

What we have advanced from in our calling is that there was a time when God was a complete foreign stranger to us. God took the action, called us, and began to separate us away from what we had been. He advanced us to the place where He actually lives in us by His Spirit. That is how close the relationship is. The Days of Unleavened Bread are actually devoted to recognition of this fact. Each year we begin the Sacred Year by reorienting our understanding of this so that we can understand how important God is to us, and how significant He is to the outworking of His purpose, and in one sense how little He requires of us in the yielding to Him so that we will produce the good fruit.

We are going to go to two verses. The first one is in I Corinthians 3. John 3:16 is pretty significant, let me tell you that this verse is very significant too.

**I Corinthians 3:16** Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

**I Corinthians 1:26-28** For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.

He is describing how insignificant we are, and it is the truth. Why does He do this?

**I Corinthians 1:29-31** That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him

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are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.