Virtual Christian Magazine
Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—1 Corinthians 5:7-8

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Why Would the Apostle to the Gentiles Keep the "Jewish" Holy Days?

By Larry J. Walker

The apostle Paul is considered by many as the originator of a theology that allegedly freed Christianity from the Sabbath, Holy Days and the law. Is this what the scriptural record indicates?



WHAT WAS PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP to the biblical Holy Days? Did he ignore them or keep them? Did he trash them or teach others to keep them? Let's carefully examine the scriptural record and consider the conclusions of renowned Bible scholars.

Paul's religious background

Paul details his strict Pharisee background in his "defense" to the Jerusalem mob (Acts 22:3). In Philippians 3, Paul renounced his self-righteous past in his new quest "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" (verse 10). Rather than dwelling on the past, he stated his focus as "reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (verse 13).

Does this mean he totally "dumped" the law when he became a Christian? Was there any place in his new life in Christ for the Sabbath, Holy Days or other "Jewish" customs?

Some of Paul's contemporaries accused him of teaching Jews to "forsake Moses" (Acts 21:20-21). At the advice of James and other elders, he performed the ritual of purification along with four other men who had taken a vow, to prove that he still kept the law (verses 22-24). David Stern analyzes the theological implications of this account:

Perhaps Paul's commitment toward the Holy Days could best be summed up: "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem."

"In spite of the arguments of v. 21...confirming Sha'ul's [Paul's] loyalty to Judaism and the Torah, many Christians suppose that when Sha'ul came to faith in Yeshua [Jesus] he stopped being Jewish, stopped observing the Law and began teaching other Jewish believers to do likewise. But those who hold this mistaken opinion have a serious problem with the ethics of these verses.

"If Sha'ul was not really Torah-observant, if he really did teach the Jews in the Diaspora not to have their children circumcised and not to follow the traditions, than [sic] he and Ya'akov [James] are exposed orchestrating a charade to deceive the Jewish believers zealous for the Torah into discounting the truth they had been told and believing a lie instead. Nothing in the whole New Testament justifies this understanding of how Ya'akov, Sha'ul or any other believer functioned" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary,* p. 304).

Paul's attitude toward the Holy Days

Perhaps Paul's commitment toward the Holy Days could best be summed up in a quote from Acts 18:21: "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem."

Some question whether this verse is valid because it is not found in some texts. (Could the omission be because it offers such strong support for the validity of Holy Days?)

However, no one questions the validity of Acts 20:16, which mentions Paul's determination to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost. He had intended to be there for Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, but circumstances required him to keep them locally (verses 1-6). That made him even more determined to be in Jerusalem for the next Holy Day—the Day of Pentecost.

The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* candidly admits, "Having been unable to get to Jerusalem for Passover, Paul remained at Philippi to celebrate it and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread" (Vol. 9, p. 507).

What about gentiles?

Acts 15 is often cited to support the claim that gentiles are exempt from the law. However, circumcision and purification of new gentile converts was the issue in Acts 15, not the entirety of the law.

Did Paul teach gentiles to observe the Holy Days?

Paul wrote the letter that we know as 1 Corinthians to the predominately gentile church at Corinth during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Most scholars agree upon this fact because of the internal

evidence, especially chapter 5, where Paul uses the analogy of leaven to make important spiritual points about sin.

Analogies and metaphors are effective only if the audience is familiar with the illustration. Paul's mention of leaven without explanation clearly implies the congregation understood the process of putting out leavening during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In their classic work *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul,* Conybeare and Howson conclude:

"There seems no difficulty in supposing that the Gentile Christians joined with the Jewish Christians in celebrating the Paschal feast after the Jewish manner, at least to the extent of abstaining from leaven at the love feasts. And we see that Paul still observed the 'days of unleavened bread' at this period of his life" (p. 390).

Paul also gives a command regarding the correct manner of keeping the Feast: "Let us keep the feast [of Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

The construction of the Greek verb translated "let us keep the feast" is called horatory subjunctive, which "is commonly used to exhort or command oneself and one's associates. This use of the subjunctive is used 'to urge someone to unite with the speaker in a course of action upon which he has already decided'" (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics,* p. 464).

Paul also gives a command regarding the correct manner of keeping the Feast.

Some go to great lengths to attempt to sidestep this clear command to "keep the feast" by alleging that the expression is in some way figurative, since he uses other figurative language in this section of Scripture. But the reason he gives to "keep the Feast" is because "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." Christ's sacrifice was a literal event; so is keeping the festival that relates to His sacrifice. And a cardinal rule of interpreting the Bible is to prefer "the simple, obvious meaning" (Edward W. Goodrick, *Do It Yourself Hebrew and Greek,* p. 12:1).

David Stern concludes:

"I question the common assumption that Sha'ul's Passover language here is entirely figurative. I see no compelling reason in the context to excise the plain sense…from the phrase, 'Let us celebrate the Seder.' Instead, it seems the early believers, Gentiles included, observed the Jewish feast of Pesach…Evidently the Corinthian congregation observed Passover without supposing that, as many of today's Christians might think, they were 'going back under the Law'" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary,* p. 447).

What about the other festivals?

What about the other festivals listed in Leviticus 23? Did Paul observe only those mentioned in the New Testament?

A similar line of reasoning asserts that only the commandments repeated in the New Testament are still valid. This careless assumption is based on an "argument from silence." Do widely known

and practiced truths need to be repeated? Stern asserts, "The New Testament does not repeat truths already evident from the Tanakh [Old Testament]; it assumes them. Sha'ul assumed them, too" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary,* p. 303).

Questions for the critics

The evidence of the scriptural record leaves two basic questions for those who consider the Holy Days obsolete.

1. Why would Paul teach against observing the Holy Days when he was himself a devoted Holy Day keeper?

2. Where does the Bible record such teaching?

Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16-17 are the main "proof texts" cited as evidence that Paul taught against the Holy Days. The following quotation reflects the position of mainstream Protestantism on the subject of the Holy Days:



"Out of the total list of Israel's God-given festivals, some are noted in the NT as still celebrated by early Christians (cf. Acts 20:16); but the sabbath and the Passover have now become, respectively, the Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper, and have been explicitly continued with moral, sacramental and typological force (He. 4:9; Acts 20:7; Mt. 26:26-28). Otherwise, however, the Hebrew feasts, including the seventh day sabbath, have been fulfilled in Christ and have been abrogated as far as their present observance is concerned (Gal. 4:10f.; Col. 2:16f.)" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* Revised Edition, article "Feasts," p. 295).

A detailed explanation of these texts is beyond the scope of this article. For a detailed, scholarly treatment of these passages, see "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Gal 4.10 and Col 2.16" by Troy Martin (*New Testament Studies,* Vol. 42, 1996, pp. 105-118). They are also discussed in our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*. You can find it or order it at http://www.ucg.org/booklets.

In Colossians 2:16-17 Paul upholds the Holy Days as "a shadow of things to come." In Galatians 4:10 he condemns pagan, astrological superstitions, which are also condemned in the Torah (Deuteronomy 18:10-14).

How and when Holy Day observance was discontinued in Christianity

We have seen that Paul and the apostolic Church observed the Holy Days of the Bible. Why and when were these observances discontinued? How did Easter, Christmas and other contemporary religious holidays begin? The record is clearly documented by church historians.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus, Paul and the apostolic Church kept the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, not Easter.



According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* "There is no trace of the celebration of Easter as a Christian festival in the New Testament or the writings of the apostolic fathers…The first Christians…continued to observe the Jewish festivals…as commemorations of events of which these had been the shadows. The Passover, ennobled by the thought of Christ the Paschal Lamb, continued to be celebrated…, and became the Christian Easter" (Ninth Edition, article "Easter").

The motivating force behind the changeover was a fierce determination to distance Christianity from Judaism. Philip Schaff explains, "There was a disposition to disparage the Jewish law in the zeal to prove the independent originality of Christian institutions. The same polemic interest against Judaism ruled in the paschal controversies and made the Christian Easter a moveable feast" (*History of the Christian Church* by Philip Schaff, Vol. 2, pp. 202-203).

The Bible establishes the date of Passover as the 14th of Nisan. Early Christians continued this observation as a memorial of Christ's death. Others (especially non-Jews) began celebrating the festival on Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection. The bitter controversy that erupted led to a decision by Constantine requiring all Christians to adopt the same day.

Church historian Philip Schaff points out, "The feast of the resurrection was thenceforth required to be celebrated everywhere on a Sunday, and never on the day of the Jewish Passover…The leading motive for this regulation was opposition to Judaism" (*History of the Christian Church,* Vol. 3, p. 405).

Constantine's letter is filled with harsh invectives. Schaff notes, "This bitter tone against Judaism runs through the whole letter."

The Council of Nicaea became a watershed mark in church history. Those who continued observing the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, the seventh-day Sabbath and other "Jewish" laws were branded as heretics.

The biblical "Passover" was changed to "Easter," the name of the Teutonic goddess of spring. The Passover lamb was replaced with Easter ham—an affront to Jews because it is biblically forbidden as "unclean" (Leviticus 11:1-7; Deuteronomy 14:8). Searching for and removing leavening from homes (Exodus 12:15) ceased, and Easter egg hunts began. The evening Passover service gave way to an Easter sunrise service.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus, Paul and the apostolic Church kept the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, not Easter.

Conclusions

Over the centuries, Easter has become enshrined as an almost universally observed Christian tradition.

The replacement of biblical injunctions with customs from other religions is seldom questioned today.

Yet Jesus warned that it is possible to worship God in vain by following humanly devised traditions (Matthew 15:9). Long before, God inspired Moses to command the nation of Israel not to adopt the religious customs of other nations to worship God (Deuteronomy 12:29-32).

We would be well advised to reconsider the biblical instructions regarding Passover and the Holy Days God established. Paul tell us that these festivals offer "a shadow of things to come" in God's plan of redemption (Colossians 2:16-17). Consider the sage advice of Will Rogers: "Never tear down a fence until you find out why it was built."

How you can find out more

The fact that you have read this article indicates that you do not want to continue to be a victim of this massive loss of truth. There is so much more to learn! The excitement parallels that of finding lost treasure. The knowledge and understanding derived from the Holy Days brings joy for the present and inspiration for the future.

Members of the United Church of God keep the Passover for the same reasons Paul gives for what many call "the Lord's Supper," "in remembrance of" the death of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

We believe that God's festivals foreshadow events in God's plan. That's part of the reason we keep the Holy Days. So did Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul and the early Church.

For more information on this vital subject, request our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: the Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. You may obtain your copy or download it in electronic form from this Web page or the United Church of God Web page at http://www.ucg.org/booklets.

The Dings Will Fade

By Janet Treadway

Do you ever feel like your weaknesses, faults and mistakes are being brought to everyone's attention? Well I experienced that with many loud dings!



I CAN STILL REMEMBER one of the most embarrassing moments of my life. After years of being out of school, I decided to go and take some college courses at the young age of 40! Some of the classes that I decided to take were computer classes.

Sad to say, when I started these computer classes, I knew nothing about computers and that included the thing attached to the computer called a "mouse." The only mice I knew about were those small, beady-eyed creatures that I would never consider holding in my hand. So here I was, in college for the first time, holding a mouse and learning all I could about PowerPoint, Word, Excel and Access.

The dinging computer exam



After a few short weeks, it was time for the first exam. This was unlike any other test I had ever taken. When you take a written test and don't know the answer to a question, only you and the professor know. But not with this computer exam! During that computer exam, every time I selected the wrong operation, the computer would make a loud "ding" sound! The whole class heard it!

It was a vicious cycle! The more the computer "dinged" with its loud, ridiculous ring—announcing to the whole class, "she got it wrong again"—the more stressed I became. The more stressed I became, the more wrong answers I would choose, and of course, the more dings I would hear!

I felt as if every eye was staring at me. I was so afraid to look up and see if the professor was glaring at me—for I heard no one else's computer sounding any dings. I wanted so badly to just get up and run out of that class never to return.

However, I did not go on my strong impulse to run out. I realized that all those "dings" meant I had some work to do to learn the computer. Plus most of my classmates probably felt sympathy rather than contempt toward me. I stayed with it and studied harder and I passed that class!

Dings of life will fade

The dinging of my computer told me something was wrong, and I had to do a lot of work to correct the situation. In the same way, examining ourselves before Passover will also reveal things we need to be working on in our lives.

Passover will be coming up soon, and it can seem like we are in a class taking a not-so-silent exam as we search ourselves and ask God to search our hearts with mercy. During this time of self-examination, it may seem as if all our shortcomings are just leaping out at us, sounding loud dings to get our attention. But though it may be painful to face up to our sins and faults, at least they are between us and God and no one else knows or needs to know.

"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). Of course, during the exam period, this correction can get us down and discourage us if we cannot clearly see the bigger picture.

What is the bigger picture? Foremost, it is that we are saved by God's forgiveness and grace—which He freely gives us—not by our overcoming or perfection in this life (Ephesians 2:8-9). Passover comes *before* the Days of Unleavened Bread, which makes it clear that God is willing to forgive our sins upon repentance *before* we have done much overcoming of our bad habits. But the Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that one of our goals in life must be to overcome and become more like God in character. Then at the return of Jesus Christ, we will be born into the family of God so that we can serve Him and others for eternity in love, compassion and mercy.

All the loud dings in our life, which let us know that something is wrong, will fade away and be replaced with God's character and the brightness of God's Spirit.

We will be uncomfortable as we see more and more of our sins—just as I was in that computer class. As our flaws are exposed, we want to run. However, if we do not run but simply humble ourselves in the Master's hands and lay all those sins and flaws at God's feet He will forgive us and help us master those flaws that are a part of our lives. In time, we will notice fewer and fewer dings.

Passover is a wonderful time to take stock of our lives, to evaluate how far we have come and what things we need to work on. It is an opportunity to move forward with growth and become more like Christ to become a new person.

We will become skilled in our Christian lives—as I eventually became skilled with the computer. All the loud dings in our life, which let us know that something is wrong, will fade away and be replaced with God's character and the brightness of God's Spirit.



"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing; to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psalm 92:12-15).

We should be growing in God's character, but if the dings ever completely stop going off in our lives then we're really in trouble! As we read in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Yes, as you and I move forward, the dings in our life will fade away, but let's hope that they never totally disappear, just get a lot quieter.

Who Killed Jesus Christ?

By Howard Davis

Why does anyone commit the ultimate act of violence against another human being? What have been the consequences of one of history's most unjust killings?



MANY PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY IN NORTH AMERICA, accept that putting an incorrigibly wicked person to death is a justifiable act. Killing innocents, however, is universally condemned. Only a madman or someone saturated by evil would kill his own brother or friend. Crazy people do that sort of thing, not normal people like us.

History is full of stories of fascinating murders. Some are fictitious, such as the myth of Oedipus Rex, the ancient Greek tragedy in which Oedipus, king of Thebes, kills his father, Laius,

unknowingly and marries his own mother. She, in turn, commits suicide when she discovers his identity.





Many murders are stranger and more fascinating than any fictional scenario. Julius Caesar was murdered in 44 B.C., assassinated by his close friend and ally, Brutus, on the steps of the Roman senate. That slaying ended a career that had changed the course of history. Henry VIII beheaded his second wife, Anne Boleyn, mother of Queen Elizabeth I. The hapless Anne was executed because, as the story goes, she did not bear Henry a male heir. He likewise had his fifth wife, Catherine Howard, put to death.

Some medieval and Renaissance popes had political and religious rivals murdered supposedly to preserve the peace of God—or, more likely, to assert political and religious control. One pope hired a hit man to try to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I to bring England back into the Catholic fold—for the peace of God, of course.

Then there is the profound account of the first murder in history. Cain, unable to control his jealousy, killed his brother, Abel, because God said Abel was right and Cain was wrong. Cain established an often-followed pattern for dealing with disagreements.

But no tragedy really compares with the miscarriage of justice that resulted in the murder and execution of Jesus of Nazareth in A.D. 31. From the betrayal by a kiss from a trusted friend to Peter's denial of even knowing Him in His greatest hour of need, the facts of Jesus' death transcend any other in meaning and consequence.

Why did Jesus have to die? Why was He accused as a criminal? Who was responsible for His death? What does His 2,000-year-old murder—disguised as an execution—have to do with us?

A tragic death's tragic aftermath

The story of Jesus' murder is dramatic enough in itself. But an attempt to affix the blame for His death leads to an account of what is arguably humanity's greatest spiritual depravity of all time.

An attempt to affix the blame for His death leads to an account of what is arguably humanity's greatest spiritual depravity of all time.

According to the Scriptures, Jesus was both divine and human. He was both the Son of God and the Son of Man. His mother was Jewish, but His message of love was universal. Jesus loved His people, the Jews, and wept for them. He also loved the gentiles with whom He dealt, breaking the taboos of some rabbis of the day. As He told Nicodemus: "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

An outrage of history is the justification the Nazis cited for the genocide of 6 million Jews less than 60 years ago. With no real respect for the teachings of Christ, Hitler and his followers declared that the Jewish race was solely and collectively responsible, in all generations, for killing

the Son of God. This poisonous doctrine brainwashed the Führer's followers into believing the Jews should themselves be exterminated for murdering the Savior of mankind.

The Bible does not support the idea of unique and total Jewish responsibility for Christ's death. But sadly, this concept did not originate with the Nazis. For almost 2,000 years mainstream Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, took this same position—often accompanied by lethal brutality.

Religions bear responsibility



Thomas Lederer, a Roman Catholic scholar, wrote in 1998 that, "whether Hitler's unspeakably in-human acts against Jews were inspired by ethnic hatred, religious prejudice, and/or by a heinous economic system, Catholics around the world today are being called by Pope John Paul II to accept some accountability for the religious pretense used by Nazi hatemongers. According to the Pope, it was much easier for Christians to turn away from the reality of gas chambers and death camps with preconceptions of Jewish responsibility for Christ's death coursing through the veins of those transfused with early childhood Christian religious education.

"'In the Christian world...the wrong and unjust interpretations of the New Testament relating to the Jewish people and their presumed guilt circulated for too long, contributing to feelings of hostility toward these people,' said Pope John Paul II in an October 1997 address to theologians taking part in a Vatican symposium on the roots of anti-Semitism in Christian teachings. 'This contributed to soothing consciences to the point that, when a wave of persecutions swept Europe fueled by pagan anti-Semitism...the spiritual resistance of many was not that which humanity expected...'" ("2000 Years: Relations Between Catholics and Jews Before and After Vatican II," www.arthurstreet.com/2000YEARS.htm).

Race hate and violence against Jews or any other ethnic group were contrary to the doctrine of Jesus and His apostles. Far from being anti-Semitic, Jesus taught that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Furthermore, all over the ancient world Jesus' disciples taught their Master's doctrine of love toward all.

They were themselves witnesses of the horrendous effects of violence. They had seen the Messiah brutalized and killed. They remembered Jesus' teaching about fighting. "My kingdom is not of this world," He said before the Roman governor Pilate. "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

Deadly prejudice takes root

Within 50 years of the death of the last of the apostles, anti-Semitism had settled comfortably into the Christianity of Rome. Many of the traditions and teachings of Roman Christians differed from those of Jesus and the apostles. A major shift was taking place. Early theologians set in motion the ostensible justification for nearly 2,000 years of violence toward the Jewish people.

Around 150 the theologian Justin (ca. 100-165) said of the Jews: "The tribulations were justly imposed upon you, for you have murdered the Just One."

Sister Pista of Darmstadt, Germany, writes that "third-century Christian theologians, including Hippolytus and Origen, elaborated on this theory" of the Jews' unique responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ. By the fourth century "it was to dominate Christian thinking" ("The Guilt of Christianity Towards the Jewish People," www.kanaan.org/israel1.htm).

The proponents of virulent anti-Semitism were the intellectuals of postbiblical Roman Catholic, and subsequently Protestant, forms of Christianity.

Theologian Lederer again writes "what seemed to exacerbate the rift between the Jews of the first century and Christians to a point of no return was the accusation of 'deicide,' that by conspiring with the Romans to crucify Jesus, the Jews who did not embrace the prophesied Messiah had actually killed God on earth."

Race hate and violence against Jews or any other ethnic group were contrary to the doctrine of Jesus and His apostles.

The charge of killing God wasn't levied solely against those Jews who were alive in Christ's time, but against the entire Jewish race for all time. Sister Pista quotes the early Catholic theologian Chrysostom (344-407) as setting up the most murderous rationale for genocide. For their alleged deicide, the Jewish people's fate in being butchered was forever justified. For this crime there is "no expiation possible, no indulgence, no pardon"; their "odious assassination of Christ" had brought this fate on them.

She continues: "Chrysostom wrote: 'God hates you.' These words of Chrysostom popularized Jew-hatred for centuries to come. Thus, to quote one historian: 'The popular Christian doctrine has always been that anyone, whether pagan or Christian, who has at any time persecuted, tortured or massacred Jews has acted as an instrument of Divine wrath.'"

The torch passes

Protestants, by assuming the same perspective that guilt for Christ's murder lay exclusively in Jewish hands, often were as anti-Semitic as their Catholic predecessors. Martin Luther (1483-1546) initially defended the Jewish people, but later stated: "All the blood kindred of Christ burn in hell, and they are rightly served, even according to their own words they spoke to Pilate…Verily a hopeless, wicked, venomous and devilish thing is the existence of these Jews, who for fourteen hundred years have been, and still are, our pest, torment and misfortune. They are just devils and nothing more" (Pista).

In 1542 Luther wrote: "Firstly, their synagogues should be set on fire…Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed…Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds…Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more…

"Fifthly, passport and traveling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews…Sixthly, they ought to be stopped from usury…Seventhly, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the axe, the hoe, the spade, the distaff, and spindle, and let them earn their bread

by the sweat of their noses…We ought to drive the rascally lazy bones out of our system…Therefore away with them…

"To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden—the Jews" (Pista).

Sister Pista observes: "Hitler and the Nazis found in medieval Catholic anti-Jewish legislation a model for their own, and they read and reprinted Martin Luther's virulently anti-Semitic writings. It is instructive that the Holocaust was unleashed by the only major country in Europe having approximately equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants. Both traditions were saturated with Jew-hatred."

The true Church and the Jews



Can any such views be found in the early record of the Church? Scripture records no hint of anti-Semitism in the biblical Church of God. On the contrary, the early Church identified deeply with Jews. The apostle Paul wrote: "I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises" (Romans 9:2-4).

If it were possible, Paul said, he would give up his eternal life if his death could somehow convert the Israelites. Anti-Semitism was abhorrent to Paul and the opposite of his faith and teaching.

Jesus said the law itself would not be done away "till heaven and earth pass away" (Matthew 5:18). An anti-Semitic hatred of "Jewish" elements of God's law came into focus only later as a new and popular form of Christianity moved away from its biblical roots.

Paul's instructions to the gentile church in Rome ran counter to the anti-Semitic teaching that later developed against the law God had given through Israel. Roman bishops later hatefully labeled as "Judaizers" those who followed the approach Paul had taken toward the law of God. Paul had written that we should keep the law because it "is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12).

But, far from any hint of anti-Semitism, the teaching of the biblical Church regarding responsibility for the death of Jesus was not focused on the Jewish people.

Notice what the Church said on this question "with one accord": "'The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.' For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done" (Acts 4:26-28).

Many of the traditions and teachings of Roman Christians differed from those of Jesus and the apostles. A major shift was taking place.

Those "gathered together" against Jesus included Judean King Herod (who was a gentile convert to Judaism and not a Jew by birth) and the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, representative of the greatest power on the civilized earth, along with gentiles and "the people of Israel." The early Church understood that gentiles were responsible for Jesus' death as much as Jews.

In his writings Paul acknowledged that his countrymen "killed the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15). At the same time we see he also held others responsible for Christ's death: "...We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery..., which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

To Paul, the spiritual ignorance and blindness of rulers were responsible for the crucifixion. He referred primarily to gentile and Jewish political authority, although Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem also bore responsibility.

Yet he knew that others, too, shared the guilt for the murder of the Son of God.

The biblical story



A few weeks before the Passover in A.D.31, Jesus supernaturally resurrected his friend Lazarus at Bethany, a few miles from Jerusalem. Word of the miracle quickly reached the religious establishment of Jerusalem. The leaders there considered Jesus a threat. He had often criticized them for hypocrisy, and He had a huge public following, some of whom already considered Him the promised Messiah, who would save Israel.

"Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation'...Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death" (John 11:47-53).

One of Christ's disciples, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Him around midnight. The mob the chief priests had assembled took Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

In a series of manipulated trials in search of a crime, Jesus' accusers trumped up charges of blasphemy against Him based on His statement that He was the Son of God. The Jewish leaders handed Jesus to Pilate, and then to Herod and back to Pilate, who sought to have Him released because he could find no grounds for punishment.

But the Jewish authorities kept up the pressure. They manipulated another mob to pressure Pilate not to release Jesus—Pilate traditionally released a prisoner each Passover—but to have Him executed.

Pilate finally consented. He had his prisoner mercilessly scourged with whips, then condemned to death by crucifixion, a death reserved for the lowest criminals and enemies of Rome.

Around 9 in the morning the Roman soldiers drove spikes into Jesus' hands and feet and raised Him upright.

The people watched, many horrified, others in shock about this turn of events. Some mocked Him as He hung for six hours in the hot sun.

Then, "about the ninth hour" (3 p.m.), as the high priest began sacrificing the lambs for the Passover observance that evening, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Matthew 27:46).

A final surge of pain wracked Jesus' body. His heartbeat slowed, then stilled. A spectacular storm erupted, with lightning and thunder. In the temple only a few thousand feet away, the huge curtain separating the Holy of Holies from its court was torn in half. The murder of the Son of God was the ultimate crime against humanity, by humanity and for humanity.

Why did He have to die?

The meaning of the events surrounding the death of Jesus Christ is revealed elsewhere in the Scriptures. We all, regardless of our race or religion, share in the blame for the death of the perfect, righteous Son of God, one who did not deserve to die.

Since all humanity shares the blame for Christ's death, anti-Semitism is entirely unjustified. The beauty of His sacrifice is that all of the crimes of humanity are paid for by this spectacular act of selflessness.

The beauty of His sacrifice is that all of the crimes of humanity are paid for by this spectacular act of selflessness.

It is by Christ's sacrifice that the sins of every man, woman and child who has ever lived are paid for. The only Man who ever lived a perfect life surrendered that life for Pontius Pilate, Herod, the gentiles and all the Israelites, the Jewish people included. He died because of every sin and for every sinner before His generation and since. He died for Judas, who betrayed Him; Peter, who denied Him; the false witnesses who testified against Him; the priests who condemned Him; and the Romans who tormented and executed Him. He died for all the violence, lying and hatred of the children of Israel and gentiles alike.

All the disciples fled from Him that day. Virtually all the others who earlier had followed Him also rejected Him that day. Most people today still reject Him. Although the world remains ignorant and unbelieving, we should understand His sacrifice and be moved to understanding and faith.

Who killed Jesus Christ?

In one of the most sublime prophecies of the Bible, the prophet Isaiah foretold who was responsible for the murder of Jesus Christ—and what that ultimately means for every human being.



"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all…He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth…

"By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, …because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:3-12).

Who killed Jesus Christ? You did. I did. We all did.

By the will of God, when we accept this fact, the way opens for us to share with Him His eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. Are you interested?

Recommended reading

To better understand Jesus' sacrifice and what it means for us, be sure to read our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *Transforming your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

The Destroyer Passed Over

By Robert Berendt

Passover *is a word not used much in the world today; but as you will see, it is not a word nor a day that we should overlook.*



THERE IS A WORD IN THE BIBLE that carries a great deal of meaning; however, it is not mentioned in Christian circles very often. The reason this word is neglected is it is firmly bound up in the writings of the Old Testament. Many of the teachings from that time were discounted as the Christian establishment tried to distance itself from anything Jewish. Much truth has been lost because of this and the richness of the Bible is compromised by the direction taken. The word I am referring to is *Passover*. It was a special event that was written about in the scriptures and there is a great deal of deep meaning associated with it and the season of the year in which we find it recorded.

The richer and greater lesson had to do with the future coming of Jesus Christ.

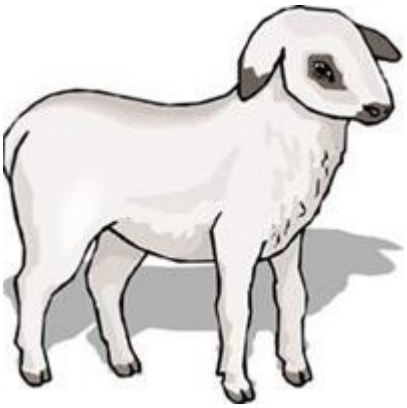
Exodus 12:11 is the first place that the word is mentioned. *Strong's Concordance* shows the Hebrew word to be *pesach* (#6453) which is taken from the root word *pasach* (#6452) and carries the meaning "to skip over, leap or pass over." Exodus 12 explains Israel was to take a lamb on the 10th day of the first month (Hebrew calendar) and keep it until the 14th day. On that day, the lamb was to be killed, the blood smeared on the doorposts of the house and the flesh roasted and eaten.

There are other details given, but the point of this article is found in verse 29. At midnight, God sent a destroyer (verse 23) to kill all the firstborn creatures in Egypt—of both man and beast (Exodus 11:4-5; 12:29-30). Where blood was smeared on the doorposts, the destroyer was to pass over (verse 27) and the firstborn would be protected in all of these homes. It may be of interest to

note that although the firstborn of the Egyptians' livestock were killed, apparently the Israelites' animals were protected.

An even greater meaning

The richer and greater lesson had to do with the future coming of Jesus Christ. His shed blood would pay for the sins of the world. The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23), but the gift of God is eternal life. Just as the Israelites had to smear the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts, so too, the protection offered by the blood of Christ also involves an act. For people today, it is the act of repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38).



From 1 Corinthians 5:7, we understand Christ is our Passover lamb. His shed blood protects those who come under its guardianship. The word *Passover* comes from the act of the destroyer passing over the homes of the Israelites. All the events of the day, preceding or following this event were related. By that I mean, the killing, smearing of blood, roasting and eating of the lamb were to take place before midnight. If the blood were not on the portals by that time, the destroyer would enter. The death penalty still exists for all people who have not truly accepted Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

The word *Passover* occurs 48 times in the Old Testament. In Exodus 12:10 and 34:25 we see the added directions that the whole lamb was to be eaten and if anything was left, it was to be consumed by fire before daybreak. In the case of small families, it was always considered appropriate for them to join others and share the meal so there would not be excess waste.

Some estimate the population of Israel at the time of the Exodus to be between 2 and 3 million. One can see that at a time of poor communication and slow travel, an enormous event was about to occur. It is not just a little family packing up and moving, but an entire nation. There would have been millions of animals added to the number and many details, such as taking along the huge sarcophagus that contained the body of Joseph (embalmed in the Egyptian manner—Genesis 50:25-26). The logistics of such a move are beyond our modern-day comprehension. Even if prepared to leave, the departure would be slow and ponderous.

Jesus sits with the disciples and partakes of the Passover.

Leviticus 23:4-6 includes the Passover in the holy convocations or feast seasons of God. It states, "on the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD." There is a distinction made when the term *Passover* is applied here. It is applied only for the 14th day. Numbers 9:1-5 also states the Passover is to be kept "on" the 14th day. There were restrictions as to who could keep the Passover and if something interfered with this special observance, God allowed the person who could not observe it on the 14th of the first month, to observe the Passover on the 14th of the second month. Once again, the terms were the same—to kill and eat a lamb. The importance can be seen when we understand that Christ was slain (therefore the Passover lamb) from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

There is no doubt Jesus Christ introduced the new symbols of the Passover at the start of the 14th day of the first month. In Luke 22:7 we read that on the evening of the 14th (Exodus 12:6) Jesus sat down with the12 disciples. The order of events (according to the synoptic Gospels) appears to be as follows:

- Jesus sits with the disciples and partakes of the Passover.
- Jesus rebukes their contention.
- Jesus washes their feet.
- Jesus identifies Judas as the traitor; Judas withdraws; and the remaining disciples profess loyalty.
- Jesus institutes the Lord's supper (new symbols of the Passover).
- Jesus addresses the 11 in the upper room and again on the way to Gethsemane.
- Jesus intercedes with the Father for His own.
- Jesus agonizes in the garden, is betrayed and arrested.

All of these events took place on the 14th day. We see references to the 14th day being the Passover day in Joshua 5:10 and the next day noted as the day they began to eat unleavened bread. The 15th day is declared to be the Holy Day and the first Day of Unleavened Bread. It is the day after the Passover (verse 11). Numbers 33:3 states that Israel departed from Egypt "on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover." Although in time the term *Passover* grew to include the whole eight-day period, its root still lies in the passing over of the marked houses of Israel by the destroyer.

We ought to understand that God counts each day as beginning at sunset, not sunrise as is customary today (Genesis 1:5, 19). Thus if Wednesday was Passover, it would actually begin on what we call Tuesday evening. This complicates our reasoning, but by understanding this point, we will see why Jesus instituted the symbols of the Passover on the night before He was betrayed. The evening occurs at the beginning of the day in God's reference. The 15th day was declared to be a day of great rejoicing because it was the day God took Israel out of Egypt (Numbers 33:3).

God's people today recognize the importance of the solemn observance of the Passover. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ allows us to receive the gift of eternal life from God and protects us from eternal death. It is what atones for our sins—it reconciles us to the Father, and His life within us leads us to salvation.

Just Like Her

By Lorelei Nettles

There are some people who jump right into our lives and then there are those who enter quietly, but make a great impression.



I REMEMBER THE FIRST DAY my family and I entered a church in a new area. We had just moved from another state and, although my husband had attended once, it was my first time to meet with this congregation.



As we opened the large wooden double doors to enter, I noticed a petite white-haired woman standing behind a small podium. As we approached, she moved around to the front and greeted us warmly. She remembered my husband from the week before and was eager to meet his family. A lovely small smile came across her face as she welcomed us to the congregation, and she informed us that we must pin on some guest flowers to show that we were, if only for that first day, visitors to the area. With that, she gave us a big hug and told us to remember that it was a requirement to give her a hug each week.

We then entered the main hall and began to meet others in the congregation. I talked to someone there about the little lady I had just met in the entry. I couldn't remember her name, but I described her and told them she had said we must always give her a hug. They replied with, "Her name is Wilma, and that's just like her." As time passed, I realized that Wilma looked after a number of things for the church. She was not only in charge of assigning the greeters each week, but she reminded people to sign cards for the shut-ins and the ill. She bought groceries and supplies for the snack service when needed. She made sure we had drinks for the potluck dinners, etc. Of course, this was only how she served others in a formal way.



As time passed and Wilma and I became closer, I saw how she served others in a more intimate way. We started riding together to various events. She would call me and together we would go to visit someone who couldn't attend church services or we would arrange to go somewhere together. She would speak of the people she needed to visit, the cards she needed to send and where to get the best deals on different supplies we needed. I always thought it was cute when she would say she wanted a picture of your family. She would take your picture and bring it to you a week or two later. I am still not sure if she ever kept a copy for herself. She was a woman who was always thinking of the church and its people and how she could get more involved with the congregation on an individual basis. If a member never got to know this neat little woman, it was their own fault because she was always there, ready and willing to open her heart to them.

If a member never got to know this neat little woman, it was their own fault because she was always there, ready and willing to open her heart to them.

When we traveled to the same area for the Feast of Tabernacles, she looked for us every day to give me a hug and if she couldn't find me one day, she would comment that I hadn't been around to see her. My son began to think of her as a second grandmother and enjoyed the loving, adult attention she gave him. While many of the things she did were small, they impacted many in big ways. While on our trip, we had a chance to spend time with some out-of-state friends that both Wilma and our family shared. The couple we were visiting gave Wilma a gift—a necklace—and she was so surprised and touched by it. As she showed it to me that night, her eyes welled up with tears. She expected nothing and was so impressed that someone might think of her in such a special way. I know she wore the necklace for the next few days after that night and I believe she wore it to church for at least the next three weeks straight.

Wilma was a friend to all, and she made many strong bonds with people. Our family hadn't had a longstanding relationship with her, but we had formed a strong bond in the short time we had known her. This frail 80-year-old woman made you feel like you were important in her life and, in fact, you were. She once told me that no one at church knew me as well as she did, and she was proud of that. She found joy in knowing people and knowing them as well as they would allow.



I remember telling someone once how I felt about Wilma. They responded with the fact that it was just like her, she touched so many people and they all felt very close to her. At first I felt dejected over the comment. I thought, Oh no, you don't understand—Wilma and I have become pretty close! I didn't want to be one in a crowd that felt a bond with her. I was special to her, and she was special to me. Then I realized that it wasn't that she hadn't had a relationship with me, but that she had a bond with many people. There was nothing false about it, she was a real friend, and she found a way to spread her love around sincerely with almost everyone she came in contact with.

Wilma was the type of woman whose presence sneaked into your life, the type of person that maybe you didn't at first expect to be close to. She had a soft, gravelly voice; and she would tell you like it was, no glossing things over. She had a thin, tight smile and a subtle wisdom about her.

Her words didn't always sink in right away, but you would find yourself pondering her comments at a later time. Proverbs 27:17, tells us, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."

Wilma was the type of person who if she made friends with you and you moved away after only a few months, she would continue to stay in touch through phone calls or by e-mail. She had friends from all over and they all felt a special bond of one kind or another with her. She was peppy and full of energy and even when she was feeling down, she still had a hug and a smile to share with you.

If only all people could find it within themselves to reach out to each and every person they meet along the way, wouldn't this world be a nicer place? Simply reaching out with the intent of trying to build a friendship can make a big difference in someone's life even if you don't see it. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times," and Proverbs 18: 24 says, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly." These are good things to remember. It is too easy to avoid others, and it is difficult especially if you are shy. But it doesn't take a lot of effort to reach out a hand and welcome someone for the first time, to give someone a little hug or to simply share a smile as you pass by. A friendship can begin with even a small gesture.

Wilma died recently, and there is a hole in the hearts of her friends that her presence used to fill. While no one will ever be able to replace her, we can all be a bit more like her. We can learn the lesson of friendship she taught. We can reach out to those around us and in our own way become better friends, expecting little in return and making other people's lives a bit better. We know that we will see Wilma again some day, and I am sure she will greet all of her friends with a little hug. It was just like her.

Tongues and Slaying in the Spirit

By Keneil N. Thomas

What are the gifts of the Spirit and will they be obvious to those around us?



IT HAD ONLY BEEN IN THE PAST TWO OR THREE YEARS that I had made the decision to follow Christ and learn as much about Him as I could. Deep down, I knew some day I would experience something like the following, but that knowledge still did not prepare me for the shock I would endure.

I am a first-year student at the University of the West Indies and attend the Mona campus in Jamaica. On Tuesday and Wednesday, November 8 and 9, 2005 a university club called UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) held a production on the theme "The Fear of the Lord." Having been invited, I attended; I had a handful of friends who were to perform and was sure it would be entertaining. It was. There was a little skit and, interspersed throughout, dancing, sign language, even dub poetry.

During the first dance performance, though, a young lady did something that surprised me. She started screaming, no, *wailing*. While on the floor, knelt and curled into a little ball, she called out to the Lord.



When the dance was over, I thought that would be the end of such displays. I was mistaken. It escalated from there, even to the point the performers started convulsing on the floor. And it didn't even stop there. Around me, in the audience, there was screaming. A lady near to me was rocking back and forth, shrieking unintelligibly.

When expressing my feelings about this experience to friends, two questioned whether or not I had received the Spirit. One suggested my not being "open"

to having the Spirit work in my life. She claimed to see the Spirit manifest in the wailing and convulsing performers, but not in me. She said to me "If you really felt Him [the Spirit], you *wouldn't* be able to stand." The other said she wished I would open my eyes to the truth and accept my need to receive the Spirit "as evidenced by speaking in tongues." They weren't questioning my sincerity or my love for Christ or God the Father, just the Spirit's power manifest in me.

What God thinks

I, of course, was a bit hurt by such words. I decided to turn to Scripture to see what God really thinks about all of this. The first passage I turned to was Acts 2, which is so quickly used to defend their teaching:

"Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:3-4).

"Tongues" or *glossa* in the Greek can mean the literal tongue in the body or the language used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations. In the aforementioned verse, both forms of the word are used. The fire that descended upon them somehow resembled the literal tongue, and the "tongues" spoken by those present were, of course, distinct and actual languages.



Search this entire chapter, the entire Bible even, and you will not find an example of someone falling and convulsing upon receiving the Spirit. The Scriptures are clear, they were not speaking the gibberish I heard at the performance. All those present heard, in their own language, what was being said (verse 8).

Paul expresses a very different view about speaking in tongues than my friends:

"Tongues" or glossa in the Greek can mean the literal tongue in the body or the language used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to *another* different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, emphasis added throughout).

Did he say *all* would have "different kinds of tongues"? No. He asks the following:

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (verses 29-30).

Just as not all are prophets, healers and miracle workers, not all will speak in tongues. Paul, once again, does not seem to place speaking in tongues as highly as one might think he should:

"And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (verse 28).

This is as clear as day. Paul says speaking in tongues should not be as much of a priority and shouldn't be stressed as much as many people think:



"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries…I wish you all spoke with tongues but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification" (1 Corinthians 14:1-2, 5).

Speaking in tongues is speaking to God only because He understands every language that was ever created and will be created, not because it has some special properties. But what exactly is the purpose of speaking in tongues? Paul tells us:

"Therefore tongues are for a sign, *not to those that believe,* but *to unbelievers"* (verse 22).

It is to be a sign to unbelievers, not to those who believe. It is for evangelizing, not for saying to fellow believers, "LOOK AT ME, I HAVE THE SPIRIT!"

Paul is the very person who tells us God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). And yet people read 1 Corinthians 14, sometimes called the "tongues chapter" because of its emphasis on this gift, and do the very thing that Paul tells us *not* to:

What exactly is the purpose of speaking in tongues?

"Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? …If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God" (verses 23, 27-28).

Not the work of the Spirit

I had seen a few examples of what is sometimes called "slaying in the Spirit" on television, but never had I experienced it face-to-face. Based on my knowledge of God, I don't see how "the fear of the Lord" would lead anyone to act so chaotically. That was not the work of the Spirit of *my* God. It seemed more to me to be the work of other spirits altogether.

Of course, I heard the argument the Holy Spirit is, well, a spirit, and should work in a similar fashion. But can you honestly, as a Bible-believing Christian, believe God would cause His people to fall and convulse? There is *not one* biblical example of "slaying in the Spirit."

In response to this, a friend (the same one who said she doesn't see me as open to the Spirit) spoke this analogy:

"Imagine someone with a mother and one without [speaking of me, of course]. One with a mother will be able to know her by communicating directly with her, while the other would only be able to know his mother through the writings she left behind. The one with a mother would be able to understand through personal experience who and what she is and would find it hard to explain what it is like to have her as part of his life and the effect her influence has on him."



This human reasoning may sound logical, but it is irrelevant since this type of "speaking in tongues" is not taught in the Bible and even contradicts the Bible. The Bible is to be our guide and all convictions we think might be from our Lord's Spirit should be compared and contrasted with these writings. Satan is clever and will deceive those who are not familiar with the Scriptures. And so, it is through the *Scriptures* that we get to know our God. God, of course, speaks to us in our daily lives through prayer and Bible study, so the Bible's teachings *must* come first; any conviction we receive that is against this Word is simply *not* from God.

The fruit of God's Spirit

So what does the Bible say? How do we know who has the Holy Spirit? By speaking in tongues? By falling to the floor whenever we feel the Spirit's presence?

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:22-24).

Reading this verse, we see the fruit of the Spirit is what *all* Christians need to show. Paul refers to everything else as spiritual *gifts* (1 Corinthians 12:1) and these are listed (verses 9 and 10). The Spirit, throughout Scripture, never incapacitates anyone, so to claim that as the work of the Spirit is unfounded.

We should all work to have the fruit of God's Spirit manifest in us. Should He choose to bestow His gifts upon us, we should be grateful and honored. But let no one put doubt in your heart about having received the Spirit because you do not ostentatiously show one of His *gifts*.

For more on this subject please read our free booklets *The Church Jesus Built* and *Is the Bible True?*

Humility of Mind and Action

By Jean Jantzen

An important part of the Passover ceremony is the washing of each other's feet. But why would Jesus want us to do it and what does it teach us?



VERY SOON WE IN UNITED CHURCH OF GOD will be partaking in the foot-washing ceremony in which each man pairs with another man and each woman pairs with another woman and they wash one another's feet. It is a simple act. It only takes a few minutes of our time. But, according to Jesus Christ, it is a very important part of the Passover service as it teaches profound lessons.

Let's read His example for us: "Jesus…rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded" (John 13:3-5). Verse 12 reads, "So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

We know that in ancient times it was one of the lowest jobs to wash another's feet. Is that the only meaning we are to learn—to become a lowly servant to another?



Just what should the foot-washing ceremony mean to us? In Exodus 12 the Israelites were about to experience their first Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Notice the symbolic meaning found here. The lamb is killed and blood is shed and put on the doorposts so God would protect the people from the death angel. Following the Passover are seven days of unleavened bread, but where is the foot-washing component?

Were the Israelites in a humble foot-washing attitude? They agreed to do what God said, didn't they? We know the story of how the Israelites complained and many rebelled. So God led them for 40 years in the wilderness to humble and test them (Deuteronomy 8:2).

In Genesis 15:13, Abram is told, "Your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years." There it is. Servitude! Bondage! A humbling experience, but did this type of trial produce a foot-washing attitude—the attitude of humility, service and love that we should have not only at Passover but year-round?

Voluntary humility

Notice that God was forcibly humbling the Israelites. Does God want to force us into humility?

No. We, as the spiritual body of Christ are to humble ourselves. It comes down to choice. It is a voluntary humbling (Romans 12:1). "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service…For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." There it is again—a humbleness of mind.

So, being a living sacrifice and having a humble attitude go hand in hand. We are to surrender ourselves to it. It is our reasonable service.

In the dictionary the word *humble* is described as:

1. Coming from the Middle English, from Old French, from the Latin *humilis*—low, humble—from *humus*—earth.
2. Not haughty, proud.
3. Submissive.
4. Ranking low in a hierarchy or scale, unpretentious.

What really surprised me here was that the word *humble* comes from the word *humus,* which means earth.



"Humus" today commonly refers to that part of the soil that is brown or black complex, variable material resulting from partial decomposition of plant or animal matter and forming the organic portion of the soil. In other words, you could call it compost. The chemical composition of humus varies depending on the plant sources. As they decompose, plant residues are converted into stable forms that are stored in the soil and are usable by plants as food. The amount of humus in soil also affects such important physical properties of the soil as structure, color, texture and moisture-holding capacity.

The ideal development of crop plants depends largely on the humus content of the soil. Some soil is certainly more productive than others, some can even be quite depleted and the plants or trees suffer or even die from a lack of this important ingredient humus.

So what can we learn from this analogy? What does compost have to do with being humble and the foot-washing service? Everything!

Humus or organic matter is living matter, and in its humble attitude or state it is something that sacrifices itself—in other words, it dies—decomposes—changes composition, if you will—and in

the process gives itself up in order to serve others (John 12:24; Matthew 10:39). To give life to other plants, animals and humans, it gives its own life through its humble service.

Humus is an excellent example of a living sacrifice.

Living sacrifice

I know I now have a deeper understanding of Romans 12 where it encourages us to become a living sacrifice like that of humus. Sometimes we forget our humble beginnings—how God made us out of the lowest part of the earth, "dust" or "humus" (Genesis 3:19). But our "dust" needs to be improved—to become like compost, or that organic part of the soil that is the most necessary part, which imparts life to others by its continual sacrifice. This is the type of sacrifice God wants from us.

Let's humble ourselves before God and one another by laying down our lives voluntarily to serve and love one another.

Let's look at an example of humbleness in action—of a living sacrifice from the Bible. Ruth of the Old Testament demonstrates the principle of the foot-washing attitude—the one we should be developing.

Ruth lived in the land of Moab and had married one of Naomi's sons who later died. Ruth did not bear any of his children. She had no further obligations to serve her mother-in-law. Naomi, after losing her husband and sons, was going back home to another country, another way of life. Naomi was not of the same religion as Ruth. But Ruth displayed an unusual attitude.

In Ruth 1:16-17, Ruth says, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, l will lodge: Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried."

Ruth in her humility, went back to the soil, so to speak, to work in the fields—giving herself in service to another human being. Like the humus or compost, her sacrifice provided sustenance or life to another. Without Ruth, Naomi would have had a difficult time obtaining food.



What makes Ruth's story different than that of the Israelites in the wilderness after that first Passover is her willingness to humble herself in service to another. She laid down her life for another as she lay at Boaz's feet—symbolic of the foot-washing attitude.

God did not have to do something to her or convince her to be humble. And because of her living sacrifice, Christ was born through her lineage and He, in turn, gave His life to be , a living sacrifice so everyone could have a chance at eternal life.

So let's not be like the physical Israelites, having to be convinced by physical trials to be in a humble foot-washing attitude. Instead, let's humble ourselves before God and one another by laying down our lives voluntarily to serve and love one another—just as the example of the humble humus—or like the examples of Ruth and Christ, who sacrificed so others may have life.

For more information about the foot-washing ceremony and more about God's Holy Days, read our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: Hope for All Mankind*.

God's Light at the End of the Tunnel

By Marilyn Braley

There is light at the end of the tunnel even if it takes 14 years to reach it.



"IT'S BEEN HALF MY LIFE, MOM," my son David told me, "that I've been under the court system." Since he is 30, he is just about right.

In 1991, 15 years ago when he was 16, neither of us knew if there ever would be light for him in this life or if he would even survive that long. God knew despite our uncertainty and determined that indeed David would survive, triumph and become an inspiration to many.

He didn't start out being triumphant or inspiring, and it seemed that the backseat of police cars and juvenile detention centers were his favorite hangout spots. He thumbed his nose at the law and wondered why law officials were out to get him. After all, the other kids got away with it. What he didn't realize was that he wasn't just any other kid. The difference was that David had been raised in the Church. He knew better than the other kids, and God was holding him accountable.



He needed some masculine "tough love," and that is just what God gave him. A few months in a military-style boot camp, with no contact with either friends or family, resulted in a changed man. In 1994 at age 19, he was given parole and quickly found a job.

He seemed to be settling into society; but, as he told me later, he still didn't have his head on straight. There were a few loose screws that needed to be tightened up. He broke parole and thought that since he was no longer committing crimes everything would be OK.

Unfortunately that was not the case and he ended up in prison in 1995 at age 20. He could have become bitter, thinking that carelessness was not a valid reason for imprisonment but he chose not to. Instead he was protective of me and reassured me that being in prison would teach him never to go back to the way he used to be. He appreciated my support and told me that inmates who get letters and visits do better. He quoted a statistic that said only 15 percent of former inmates do not go back to prison. He boldly declared that he would be one of those. He determined to hold on to his humanity and trusted God to protect him versus spending his family's hard-earned money to pay for protection from varying prison assaults. God honored his faith and determination by seeing him through.

He seemed to be settling into society; but, as he told me later, he still didn't have his head on straight.



God showed us a glimpse of the millennium when 24-year-old David walked through the prison walls and into my arms—interestingly, right before the 1999 Feast of Tabernacles, which pictures this. It was thrilling to experience his first few days in the free world with him. Adjusting to society was not easy, especially with strict court supervision. But this time he was ready for it and understood that "rules are not made to be broken." He impressed his parole officers and employers, with both his determination and his charm. He put himself through diving school, and his employers as well as parole officers worked with him in order to ensure both success and productivity on the job along with compliance of court-required monthly parole visits.

At just the right time, when the 2005 Days of Unleavened Bread were approaching, thanks to God's intervention, his persistence was rewarded. He was no longer under parole or court supervision and reached God's light at the end of the tunnel. He now walks free, as long as he obeys the law and does not go back to his former life. David's life is a good example of coming out of sin—a lesson of the Days of Unleavened Bread. He has now put on the new (law-abiding, productive) man in place of the old (criminal) man, thanks to God's help—a lesson of Pentecost.

For more interesting reading, please read our free booklet *Making Life Work*.