

# THE LORD'S PASSOVER SUPPER

## OBSERVED BY JEWISH CHRISTIANS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

### *No. 1 in a Series of 3 Articles on The Supper*

By Jack W. Langford, 1987

- \* Are the "**Passover**" and the "**Lord's Supper**" one and the same?
- \* Did the early Jewish Christians celebrate the Passover during the book of Acts time period?
- \* Was the Passover celebrated universally by the Jews in the dispersion as well as in Jerusalem?

### *UNIQUENESS OF WORSHIP FOR THE CHURCH AGE*

If there is one thing factual about Biblical Christianity which cannot be contested, it is that Christ planned for His Church a unique spirituality of worship. The words of Jesus Christ as recorded in John 4:23,24 express the epitome of worship for this present age. Christ said, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father *in spirit and in truth*, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. *God is Spirit*, and those who worship Him must *worship in spirit and truth*." There is no mistaking what Christ meant. These words were elucidated in the context of opposition to worship in the physical ritualism of a certain "mountain" or the Temple of "Jerusalem." The essence of worship in Christianity is to be in spiritual realities and not in physical ritualism. Furthermore, as to the specific communion of Christ's body and blood, it would be a spiritual realization and not a physical ritual. Christ said, "I am the bread of Life. *He who comes to Me* shall never hunger, and *he who believes in Me* shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Then Christ said again, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man (coming to Him) and drink His blood (believing on Him), you have no life in you...*It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing*. The words that I speak to you *are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:53,63). In light of Christ's own immediate interpretation, the utter stupidity of Rome's interpretation of this passage as referring to the physical ritual of the Mass is a classic example of Christendom's religious intoxication (see Revelation 17:1-4).

The apostle Paul, Christ's ambassador to the Gentiles, applies these same principles directly to the churches of Jesus Christ—"For we are the circumcision, *which worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*" (Philip. 3:3). Furthermore, Paul clearly summarizes Christianity in these words, "*The Kingdom of God is NOT eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17).

Biblical Christianity, therefore, could never be a system of religion centered around the ceremony of physically eating at some altar or table such consecrated foods as crackers and grape juice! This may sound like a crude thing to say in light of the fact that the vast majority of Christendom observes the "most sacred" meal as the very "Holiest of All" rituals in their worship system. The giant Roman Catholic cathedrals are literally called "Temples of the Host" (the

Host is the wafer which under consecration supposedly becomes "Jesus Christ, body, soul and divinity" in the Mass). The mass of Rome is also called "The Holy Eucharist." Protestants will commonly call it "Holy Communion." Many fundamentalists will simply call it "The Lord's Supper." No matter how it is designated, they all unite in saying that Christ instituted this "sacred meal" the night He was betrayed.

### **The Lord's Passover Supper**

One may properly ask the question, "If the truth about worshiping in the Spirit with no confidence in the flesh means that we are not to have any physical ordinances in the Church today, then how do you explain the fact that the night of the last supper when Christ was betrayed He instituted this new supper observance for the Church?"

The answer is surprisingly simple. Most Christians under the influence of traditionalism rarely even want to give it consideration. Christ did not institute a new supper!! He gave beautiful truth about the fulfillment of the Passover Supper—but he never instituted a NEW supper!! It is perfectly clear from reading the Gospel accounts of the last supper Christ ate with His disciples that this feast was specifically and repeatedly called "The PASSOVER." As an example, read Luke 22:1-20. SIX TIMES in this account it is clearly designated as the Jewish "Passover Supper"! Note the following passages from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22, verses—

1. "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called *Passover*."
7. "Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the *Passover* must be killed."
8. "And He sent Peter and John, saying 'Go and *prepare* the *Passover* for us, that we may eat.'"
11. "...Where is the guest room where I may *eat the Passover* with My disciples?"
13. "So they went and found it just as He said to them, and they *prepared the Passover*."
15. "Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to *eat this Passover* with you before I suffer.'"

The evidence is obvious! The last supper Christ ate with His disciples was, very simply, none other than the historic, Jewish Passover Supper. No Bible teacher, Biblical scholar or Biblical historian has ever denied this fact!! What many of these men will do, however, is to contend that Christ must have instituted a different "supper" sometime after the regular "Passover Supper" had been eaten. Of course, this is virtually impossible to prove. It is pure conjecture. Therefore, most don't even attempt to prove it because they know it can't really be done. A harmony of the four Gospels shows that all the ingredients of this whole Supper, even the "blessings of the cup" before and after Supper are within the context of the Passover celebration. The very last thing done was to sing a hymn (Mark 14:26). And this is also within the context of the Passover celebration even to this day.

What Christ did at this particular Passover meal was to show that the Feast was typical of Him and the work of redemption that He would perform. The two important elements of the Passover meal, the matzos bread and the wine, spoke of His body being broken and His blood being shed for the remission of sins. Christ explained this to the disciples "*as they were eating*" (i.e., *the Passover*, Mark 14:22; Matt. 26:26 & Luke 22:14-20). Therefore, He emphasized, as often as they would eat this Passover Feast (once a year, on the 14th day of Nisan) they were to

do it in remembrance of Him and not as the unbelieving Jews who did not realize its application. That Christ brought *new truth* to their attention—He most certainly did! That Christ instituted a *New Supper*—He most certainly did NOT!!

Many will then contend that the apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians 11 calls this new meal that Christ supposedly instituted "the Lord's Supper," and this is plainly different from the "Passover Supper." In answer to this contention we can simply point to the fact that the Passover supper had long been called "the Lord's," even from its beginning institution by Moses. This is plainly stated in such passages as Exo. 12:11, 17 & Lev. 23:5. Consequently, its fullest designation was always "the Lord's Passover Feast or Supper." The apostle Paul simply gives it the abbreviated form—"the Lord's Supper." By no stretch of the imagination does that make it a different supper. In fact, Paul's description of the feast is verbatim the same as that found in Luke 22 where it is repeatedly called "the Passover." I will go into I Corinthians 11, in detail, in my next study "*The Divisive Use Of The Lord's Supper.*"

### **Christendom's Breakfast Snack**

A glaring irony to this whole ritual which is presently observed in Christendom is that in no way, shape or form does it resemble the "Supper" that Christ observed or that some of the Jews at Corinth were observing. The last Supper that Christ partook of was an evening dinner—a full feast meal. What is presently done in Christendom could at best be called a "breakfast" because it is habitually done in the morning. But since it does not even qualify as a breakfast, it would realistically only be a "Sunday morning snack," and that would be straining to get the most out of a sip of wine (grape juice to many) and a piece of cracker. Consequently, what is done in most churches today has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with observing a genuine "SUPPER." By this time you should realize that modern Christendom is a little bit "tipsy."

In addition, the following realization of what Christendom is actually doing should make the sincere spiritual Christian nauseated! Look again, and remember that in the Bible the "Lord's Supper" was always an evening meal because it commemorated Christ's death—first, the death of the lamb back in Egypt—and then, the death of "the Lamb of God." Christ, the antitypical Passover Lamb was sacrificed in the afternoon. The meal that commemorated that *death* was immediately celebrated in solemnity that night. And just what is Christendom now doing?? It chooses to celebrate the DEATH of the Son of God not in the evening, as in the Biblical setting, but in the MORNING—and not just any morning—but *on Sunday Morning!!* Yes! On the morning that should speak of Christ's *resurrection and glory*, they choose to commemorate his Suffering and Death. Do you realize the perversion in this traditional arrangement of Christendom??

"The wisdom behind this confusion obviously comes from the Devil—the mastermind of all confusion." These are the words I stated one time in the home of some devout Plymouth Brethren as we were discussing the subject. An older man who was present rose up off his chair in a rage and approached to strike me. Fortunately there was a coffee table between us and the gentleman, in whose house we were having this discussion, also stood up and intervened to restrain the older man. When the older man finally regained his composure he declared that he was only manifesting "righteous indignation" and that "the meeting was over—would I please leave!" It was obvious that my observation struck a sensitive nerve that led directly to the exposure of his most holy idol to desecration.

And no, you will not find any verse in the Bible that says the early Christians went around celebrating "the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning." Try to find such a verse! And if you think you've found something close, just ask yourself, "does it really say that?" That they ate many meals together, no one doubts. That they "broke bread" at these meals, no one doubts. To think this is the same thing as observing the Lord's Passover Supper shows that one not only is a little "tipsy," but his vision is really blurred. In my next study I will cover the many instances of "breaking bread" in their common fellowship meals together.

### **"Devouring One Another"**

When the apostle Paul wrote his blazing letter of rebuke to the Galatian churches it was over the issue of these Gentile assemblies being deceived to return to ritualism and the carnal ordinances in worship. No less an occasion than Peter's eating habits was the launching point for Paul's public rebukes. The exclusive eating of kosher meals with the Jewish members of the congregation was a sectarian divisive action that would split the congregation (see Galatians 2:11-14). Moreover, the infestation of the old physical rituals into the spiritual worship of the primarily Gentile assemblies would eventually bring about more splits and divisions than all other causes combined. Hence Paul admonishes, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed of one another" (Gal. 5:15). Within three hundred years the State Incorporated "Christian" Churches were not even recognizable compared to the early Christian communities. Ritualism became the rule and the Papacy was nothing but baptized paganism.

However, throughout the centuries of the Christian era, certain faithful Bible teachers and their less popular groups have contended that Christendom's "Holy Communion" or "Lord's Supper" was in reality a mere caricature of the old Jewish Passover Supper, and that it was never the Savior's intent that such a ritual should be carried over into pure Christianity. To say the least, these people were looked upon with disfavor and contempt by the majority in Christendom. In the tenth century the Roman Catholic Empress Theodora had one hundred thousand Paulicians massacred. If you think this is an exaggeration, just read the official Roman Catholic version of the bloody slaughter—*The Inquisition*, by Vacandard, translated by Conway, published by the Paulist Press, Nihil Obstat: Thomas Shahan, S.T.D., Imprimature: John Farley, D.D., Archbishop of New York, Copyright, 1907, pages 50-55. The crime of the Paulicians and others (the Bogomiles, Catharans, Manicheans, etc.) was, among other things, boldly set forth as their denial of the Popish pagan Mass or so-called "Holy Communion."

When the Protestant Reformation blossomed they set aside five of the seven sacraments of Romanism—leaving water baptism and the supper. The Quakers boldly set aside all the sacraments including water baptism and the supper. Most theologians have acknowledged that at least the Quakers were consistent. The Quakers' reasons were plainly spelled out. They said that the modern "Lord's Supper" is nothing more than a carryover and corruption of the ancient Jewish Passover Supper. In the last several generations certain able Bible teachers have echoed the very same observations. Especially has this been true among some of the Dispensational and Ultra-Dispensational teachers. Their observations are worthy of more consideration than most want to give them. It is a fact, for which we can be thankful, that right now these things can be discussed without fear of having one's head lopped off.

### **A "Searchlight" that Blinds the Facts**

Recently an article appeared in a Bible study magazine called "The Berean Searchlight," edited by Cornelius Stam. The article was written by Richard Jordan. This article supposedly spells the death knell to any and all "arguments advanced to support the contention that the Lord's Supper is in reality an extension of the Jewish Passover" (Berean Searchlight, August, 1986, Page 133). The author contended that "The Passover was a Jewish feast and, as such, was to be celebrated *only in Jerusalem.*" He cited Deut. 16:5,6 which states that the Passover lambs were to be sacrificed only in the place where God would place His Name once the people of Israel came into the land of promise. That place came to be Jerusalem. Furthermore, he pointed out, it was in Jerusalem where the three major Feasts were to be observed by all the males (Deut. 16:16). Consequently, he concludes, the Passover would never be observed at such cities as Corinth, and the Passover, therefore, could not be the same as the "Lord's Supper" which was observed at Corinth. Obviously, Mr. Jordan is not very well informed about the Biblical or historical truths of the Passover. Let us be "noble Bereans" (Acts 17:10,11) and check our Bibles and some plain facts of history as well. There is no profession more honorable than "proving all things" as commanded by Paul in I Thess. 5:21. The Bible will tell us what God authorized them to practice and where. Historical information will also confirm what the Bible indicates.

### **Who was to eat the Passover?**

Initially, the Passover was meant to be a family meal participated in by all the households of Israel (Exo. 12:3,4). This aspect of the Feast never changed throughout the whole history of the Jewish people and is still true today. The first Passover was eaten by all the families of Israel while they were in the land of Egypt. During the wilderness journey the households ate the meal in their tents. Once they arrived in the promised land they ate in their houses. When the ark and the tabernacle were first situated in Shiloh, and later in Jerusalem, that location became the place where all the ritual sacrifices were to be performed.

The Law of Deut. 16:5 & 6 only proves that the sacrifice of the Passover should be done in Jerusalem where God's name was said to be placed. Likewise, Deut. 16:16 requires only the presence of the males in Jerusalem for the three specified Feasts. This, of course, meant that the principle observance of the Feasts would be conducted in Jerusalem. However, none of these commandments were prohibitions against the continued household observances of the Holy Days. In the case of the Passover, families outside of Jerusalem went right on serving a Seder meal in their homes every Passover. However, they did this without a ritually sacrificed lamb. The High Sabbaths of all the Feast days were just as much observed and revered throughout the land of Israel, and even throughout all the nations where Jews were later scattered, as they were in the city of Jerusalem. These Feasts were observed wherever the Jews were scattered throughout the world. But the only place where sacrifices were allowed was in the city of Jerusalem at the Temple.

As to the Passover itself, I say again, it was always the intent of the Law that this should be participated in by all the households of the Jewish people. Even the stipulation of Deut. 16:5 is prefaced by the words of the previous verse (4), "*And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee IN ALL THY COASTS (BORDERS) SEVEN DAYS.*" Very plainly, this meant in all the land of Israel, throughout all its extremities, they would be observing the Passover by eating unleavened bread for the seven day duration, just as they were doing in the city of Jerusalem where the sacrificial lambs were being offered. The only thing they would not be doing throughout the land was offering the sacrificial lambs.

## Where do the Jews celebrate Passover?

The first celebration of Passover was in the land of Egypt. The next place of celebration was in the Sinai desert for forty years. Next the people of Israel celebrated the Feast throughout the land of Israel, but the principle observance was in Jerusalem where the sacrifices were made. Next, Israel was scattered throughout the known world. Did they stop the celebration of Passover? By no means! The fact that the Jewish Passover is celebrated all over the known world today is obvious to everyone. The Encyclopedia Judaica (Vol. 13, Pg. 163,167) states,

"Passover, (Heb. Pesah) a spring festival, beginning on the 15th day of Nisan, lasting seven days in Israel and eight days in the Diaspora...In the Diaspora the Seder (Passover meal) is repeated in the second night."

This is not done in violation to the law of Moses. The Jews carefully leave off the sacrificial lamb in compliance with Deut. 16:5 & 6. They usually have in its place only the shank bone. This custom of eating the Passover meal outside the land of Israel goes way back to pre-Christian times. It began with the Captivity. Ceil and Moishe Rosen, who regularly give Passover Supper presentations have stated in their book, "Christ in the Passover," (Moody Press, 1978, Page 39) the following,

"After the return from Babylon, the Israelites rebuilt the Temple and the 'Children of the captivity kept the Passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.' At that time, not all of the Jewish people returned to the land. Some stayed in Babylon, where they had built businesses and made new lives for themselves; others migrated and formed small Jewish communities throughout the civilized world. Ancient records bear out the fact that in those days the exiles observed Passover as a permanent part of the Jewish religious life. They could not sacrifice the Passover lambs unless they made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but they did keep the other two important precepts of the holiday: they purged all leaven from their households, and they ate unleavened bread for seven days."

Furthermore, when the Temple at Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and desecrated by the Greeks and laid waste for many decades, the Jewish people simply continued their home observance of the Feast, both in the land of Israel and out of it. Consequently, after the rebuilding of the Temple in Ezra's day and after the cleansing of the Temple in the times of the Maccabees, there would be a dual observance of the Passover. It would continue to be observed in the homes and synagogues of the Diaspora who could not travel to Jerusalem. And once the Temple was functioning again it would be observed there in great ritual. This is nowhere rebuked by any prophet or in any page of Scripture—both Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. In this connection, Hayyim Schause, in his very popular *Guide to Jewish Holy Days*, (Pub. by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Page 47) says the following,

"The Pesach ritual at the time (the last century of the Temple) was a compromise between the Pesach of the very old days that was observed in the homes, and the Pesach that followed it, the holiday that was observed in the Temple. Observance, therefore, was divided into two main parts, and was celebrated in two main places, the Temple and the Home. In the afternoon of the day before Pesach, the sacrificial animal was slaughtered with elaborate ceremonies in the Temple; it was then taken home, roasted, and eaten in groups, with ceremonies that are almost identical with

the Seder observed by Jews today. Outside of Jerusalem the offering of the sacrifice was not allowed and Pesach eve was observed in the Home, in the family circle, and in the synagogue. In some places it was customary to eat roast lamb, though *no sacrifice was offered.*"

### **Further Evidence**

The fact that all Jewish males were to appear in Jerusalem for the three Feasts (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) did not prohibit the Jews of the dispersion from celebrating the Feasts in their own lands. The very zealous Maccabees, who restored the Temple and the performance of the sacred ordinances of the Law, also encouraged the Jews of the Diaspora to celebrate the Feasts in their own lands. *II Maccabees*, Chap. 1, verses 1,9,18 & 2:16 state—

"The Jews in Jerusalem and in the land of Judah send greetings to their brethren the Jews in Egypt and wish them true peace... We are now reminding you to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) in the month of Chislev... We shall be celebrating the Purification of the Temple on the twenty-fifth day of the month Chislev, so we thought it right to inform you, that you too may celebrate the Feast of Booths...(and to also) celebrate the Feast of the Purification of the Temple." (Aprox. 164 B.C.)

Demetrius, the son of Seleucus of the line of the Greek rulers, was authorized by the Romans to rule in the provinces of Syria and Palestine. For security he sought the friendship and alliance of the Judean armies under the leadership of Jonathan Maccabees by granting freedom and privileges to all the Jewish people scattered throughout his realm. Here are his words as recorded in *I Maccabees* 10:33-35. This took place in approximately 152 B.C.—

"Every one of the Jews who have been carried into captivity from the land of Judah into any part of my kingdom I set at liberty without ransom; and let all their taxes, even those on their cattle, be canceled. Let all Feast days, Sabbaths, New Moon Festivals, appointed days, and the three days that follow, be days of immunity and exemption for every Jew in my kingdom. Let no man have authority to exact payment from them or to molest them in any manner."

Thus again, it is illustrated that the Jews could observe their Feasts outside the city of Jerusalem, and expressions like this from the kings and rulers showed that the nations expected them to do so.

### **The Situation at the Time of Christ**

At the time of the birth of Christ explicit sanction had been given by the Roman government for all the Jews of the empire to observe their customs—including the "common (fellowship) suppers," the "Holy Festivals," their "sacred worship," and "sabbaths." The following is an accounting of this from Josephus the first century Jewish historian. See *Antiquities of the Jews* XIV, X, 8, 12, 13, 23 & 25,

"Julius Caius, praetor (consul) of Rome to the magistrates, senate, and people of the Parians, sendeth greetings. The Jews of Delos, and some other Jews that

sojourn there, in the presence of your ambassadors, signified to us, that by a decree of yours, you forbid them to make use of the customs of their forefathers, and their way of sacred worship. Now it does not please me, that such decrees should be made against our friends and confederates, whereby they are forbidden to live according to their customs, or bring in contributions for common suppers and holy festivals, while they are not forbidden so to do even at Rome itself; for even Caius Caesar our emperor and consul...did yet permit these Jews, and these only, both to bring in their contributions, and to make their common suppers...I permit these Jews to gather themselves together, according to the customs and laws of their forefathers, and to persist therein...and that their sacred offices, and accustomed festivals and assemblies, may be observed by them, we have decreed...(and their) sabbaths."

Alfred Edersheim reflects on these laws in his work, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, Vol. 1, Chapter V, pages 71, 76 & 77,

"In truth, there was no law to prevent the spread of Judaism...the Jews enjoyed not only perfect liberty, but exceptional privileges. In the reign of Caesar and Augustus we have quite a series of edicts, which secured the full exercise of their religion and their communal rights. In virtue of these they were not to be disturbed in their religious ceremonies, nor in the observance of their sabbaths and Feasts. The annual Temple-tribute was allowed to be transported to Jerusalem, and the alienation of these funds by the civil magistrates treated as sacrilege...Their sabbath observance, their fastings on Thursdays, their Day of atonement, their laws relating to food, and their pilgrimages to Jerusalem—all found sympathizers among Judaising Gentiles. They even watched to see, how the sabbath lamp was kindled, and the solemn prayers spoken which marked the beginning of the sabbath. But to the Jew of the Synagogue was the bond of union throughout the world. There, on Sabbath and Feast days they met to read, from the same Lectionary, the same Scripture-lessons which their brethren read throughout the world, and to say, in the words of the same liturgy, their common prayers, catching echoes of the gorgeous Temple-services in Jerusalem."

### **Conclusion of the Matter**

The only response that I received from Mr. Jordan of the Berean Searchlight, after all this evidence was delivered to him, was a statement that he would need time to examine the evidence. In the meantime he said that probably any observance of Passover outside of Jerusalem would be regulated to a mere superficial observance of "the Jew's religion," rather than in obedience to God's Word. This is another hasty presumption on his part. Nevertheless, it is obviously factual and Biblical that the Jews observed Passover outside of Jerusalem.

True enough, the Jewish religious leaders of Christ's day had accumulated many traditions that actually contradicted the Law of Moses. However, several other traditions, especially as they centered around the Feast days, were perfectly acceptable in the sight of God. For instance, several additional Jewish Feast days were added later in their history. The "Feast of Purim" and the "Feast of Dedication" or "Feast of Lights" are examples. These did not contradict the Law of Moses. They played an important part in national significance and in the

Jewish social life. In addition, there was the observance of certain "Fasts" that had to do with the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. The later prophets said that these "Fasts" would later become "Feasts" in the future day of Israel's restoration (see Zech. 8:19 & Jer. 39:2 & 52:6). Even the Passover itself, at the time of Christ, had an additional day of special commemoration for the Passover Lamb added on at the beginning of the Feast (see Josephus, *Antiq.* II, 15.1 & the *Jerusalem Talmud*, Pes. 27d). This began on the 14th day of Nisan and is vital in understanding the chronology of events at the time of Christ's suffering and death (see My study, "*Christ Our Passover*," page 9).

Of primary concern to us now is the fact that the evidence is overwhelming which proves the Passover was celebrated in homes and synagogues throughout the world during the time of the early Church. The Passover was celebrated in full coordination with the ritual observance held in Jerusalem. This was noted by Edersheim and seen in the Maccabees. It is further attested to by Max Rabin in his book, *The Jews Among The Greeks and Romans* (Jewish Publication Society, pages 86 & 97),

"The existence of the Jewish communities in Egypt from Pre-Persian times is established by them (the Assuan and Elephantine Papyri), and particular interest centers upon one of them, which alludes to the Passover celebration and represents the Egyptian Jewries as referring certain questions to the Palestinian community. It must be clear that if Passover had been celebrated in Egyptian surroundings for two centuries (B.C.), the Egyptian neighbors of the Jew knew of the Feast's existence and of the occasion it was intended to celebrate (their removal from Egypt)...The mere celebration of Passover was apt to make permanent a certain hostility between the two nations."

Thus, whether in the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian or Roman empires, or even in Egypt itself, the Passover was celebrated in compliance with the celebration in Jerusalem.

In the more recent work, *The Jewish People In the First Century* (Foundation Compendia Reum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, edited by Safrai, Stern, Flusser and Van Unnik, Vol. 2, pages 808 & 809), a concluding remark about the Passover is to be noted. This work, by the way, does a monumental job in describing the Jewish setting for the birth of Christianity. It states in one section,

"We shall consider here only the celebration of the Feast (Passover) outside Jerusalem...This (Passover celebration) seems to have been done everywhere, not merely in Jerusalem."

Thus, it is abundantly established that the household and Synagogue observances of the Passover and other Feasts were celebrated throughout the world from the beginning of the dispersion of the Jews from the land of Israel, through the times of early Christianity and up until this very day.

### **The Passover Observed by Early Jewish Christians** *Both in Jerusalem and in Other Cities*

An abundance of information in the Greek Scriptures (commonly called the New Testament) spells out the fact that the early Jewish believers continued to observe all the Law and its festival services including the Passover.

First of all Christ, Himself, had placed an endorsement upon the Law as well and gave new meaning to the great Passover subject—see Matt. 23:1-3; Luke 22:15, etc. Indeed, the early Jewish Christians were often held in esteem by the Jewish people because of their Christian zeal in the observance of the Law, the Holy days and in their integrity of association—see Acts 2:1, 46, 47; 3:1; 4:21; 5:12,13 & 21:20, etc.

The book of Acts literally abounds with evidences that the early Jewish believers observed all the Mosaic Law system, including general Law keeping (Acts 21:20,24; 23:5), Temple worship (Acts 3:1; 21:26; 22:17), Jewish vows with circumcision and head shaving (Acts 16:3; 18:18; 21:24), Sabbath keeping (Acts 16:13; 17:2), dietary restrictions, meats and drinks (Acts 10:11-14; Heb. 9:10), respect for the position of the High Priest (Acts 23:1-5), and finally, the Passover and other Feasts (Acts 12:3,4; 18:21; 20:16).

### **The Transition out of Judaism is Gradual**

The book of Acts is obviously transitional in nature. That is, it records the very beginnings of the Church of Jesus Christ as a totally Jewish community who were Law observant. At this stage Christianity was simply considered a sect of Judaism. That the Mosaic Law system was being terminated was only gradually revealed to them. First, by the middle of the book of Acts, chapters 10-15, it was revealed to them that new converts from among the Gentile peoples were not to be placed under the Law (see Acts 15:19-31). The Jewish believers themselves continued to observe the Law (Acts 21:19-25). It is not until the Hebrew Christians are directly addressed in the book of Hebrews, that they are told that the Law system "is now ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). The whole book of Hebrews takes the Jewish Hebrew Christians out of the Mosaic Law system into the spiritual realities we have in Christ. Thus, when the Temple is finally destroyed in 70 A.D., both Jew and Gentile believers are able to walk together in the light of the "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:1-6).

During this time of transition the apostle Paul will take a Nazarite vow in Cenchrea in preparation for going to Jerusalem for one of her Feasts—Acts 18:18, 21. After writing I and II Corinthians (to solve congregational problems), and Romans and Galatians (primarily for the Gentiles—see Rom. 1:13,14; 15:15-19; Gal. 2:2,9,14; 3:14; 6:12), the apostle Paul went again to Jerusalem, shaved his head again in a Jewish vow, purified himself, and made preparation for animal sacrifice—Acts 21:24,25. This was in observance of the Feast of Pentecost—Acts 20:16. It is also to be noticed that when Paul began this trip back to Jerusalem he first paused in Philippi during the "Days of Unleavened Bread" (Acts 20:6).

Paul performed these ritual observances in good conscience, as a Law abiding Jew (see I Cor. 9:20), and finally to prove that the accusation that he was telling Jews to stop the practice of the Law was false—Acts 21:24. If you keep in mind that such books as Romans and Galatians were written to Gentile believers, you will understand they do not specifically tell the Jewish believer to stop the practice of the Law. It is true, of course, that these truths Paul reveals in Romans and Galatians are "the handwriting on the wall," so to speak, that the Law system will soon be abolished for everybody in practicality. Until Hebrews is written the Jewish believer is not specifically instructed to terminate his practice of the Law system. Therefore, the Law system with the Passover Supper was being practiced by the Jewish households in the Christian congregations everywhere during the book of Acts transitional time period.

## **The Jewish Believer's Observance of Passover**

During the night of Christ's observance of Passover with the apostles (Matt. 26:17), He had taken the matzos bread and said "Take, eat; this is (represents) My body" (Matt. 26:26). Again He said as He took the Passover cup, "Drink ye all of it; for this is (represents) My blood" (Matt. 26:27, 28). And in summary, "as often as you do this, you do show forth the Lord's death, till He comes" (I Cor. 11:24-26).

Taking all these passages literally as they read, and not diluting them with later traditions of ritualistic Christendom, we would understand that each year when the Jewish believers came to the Passover, they would observe it in light of the beautiful truths Christ had placed upon it. It all spoke of Him. He was the antitypical Lamb Who died for our sins. The rest of Judaism only followed the routine of an ancient Feast without any pertinent realization of spiritual fulfillment.

There is an interesting sidenote to this Passover Supper that Christ had eaten with His apostles. It has long been a dilemma to many Christians as to how Christ could eat the Passover with the disciples and yet die at the exact time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed as the Scripture seems to indicate. Obviously the regular Passover Supper is eaten AFTER the death of the lambs and not BEFORE.

In answer to this it has long been pointed out by certain Bible teachers and some scholars that Christ was indeed crucified on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nisan, at the precise time the priests in the Temple were sacrificing the annual Passover lambs (John 18:28; 19:31,36; I Cor. 5:7). Consequently, Christ ate His Passover supper with the apostles a day early, on the evening beginning the fourteenth day. It is obvious in all the four Gospel accounts of that Supper that no actual Passover lamb is mentioned as being an ingredient in the meal. Therefore, Christ used the emblems of the bread and wine as representing His body and blood. There is nothing prohibiting the author of the Passover to eat the Supper as He pleases and when He pleases. There are many other proofs of this in my study, "*Christ our Passover.*"

Mr. Jordan of the Berean Searchlight had argued, "The simple fact that they would claim to keep the Passover without the Passover lamb is evidence that they are not keeping the Passover. I see no Scriptural authorization for such actions." The facts are, Christ did it and both believing and non-believing Jews throughout the world did it.

Interestingly enough, historical records again show that there was, at the time of Christ and by many in Israel until this very day, a preparatory Passover Supper eaten the day before the regular Passover Supper is eaten. See Edersheim's *The life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, Vol. 2, page 479; Josephus, *Antiq.* II, 15.1; *Jerusalem Talmud*, Jer. pes. 27d; etc. The monumental work that I referred to earlier, *The Jewish People In The First century*, says concerning this meal that was to be taken the night before Passover (Vol 2, page 809), "The eve itself (night before Passover) was a sort of Feast, because the paschal sacrifice was offered that afternoon." It was appropriate therefore that Christ, the real antitypical Paschal Sacrifice, made that earlier "Feast" His last Passover Supper before He died.

### **Observance of Passover by Hebrew Christians Attested to by History**

The continued observance of the Passover by Jewish Christians is also attested to in religious secular history—see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:23 and *Epiphanius Panarion*,

Haer. 70, 10. These are alluded to in the book by the Rosens, *Christ in the Passover*, wherein they also say (Page 59 & 91),

"Almost all the early Christians were Jewish. They celebrated the resurrection of Jesus at Passover time and called it Pascha. (Later it was mistranslated Easter, see Acts 12:3,4)...The bishops (Jewish of Jerusalem) sent out Paschal epistles every year to notify the Christians when Pascha would fall according to the Jewish lunar calendar (i.e., the fourteenth day of Nisan)...**The early Jewish Christians incorporated into their own Passover services the spiritual lessons, customs, and insights taught them by Jesus Himself at the last supper.** Because these early Jewish Christians at first were considered an acceptable sect of Judaism, some of their customs and interpretations became a part of the Passover ritual of that time."

As noted above, the Rosens strongly believe, as do others, that several of the present day customs done in the modern celebration of the Jewish Passover stem from the influence of the early Jewish Christians. They cite *A Feast of History* by Chaim Raphael, page 86, which mentions, "the ambivalent status for a time of the Jewish Christians," as recognition, at least, of their existence and influence. On page 89 the Rosens state, "Neither Jewish folklore nor Rabbinic Judaism has an adequate answer to these perplexing questions (about certain customs at the modern Passover service)." They conclude that the only "plausible explanation" is the influence of the early Jewish Christians in their celebration of the Feast.

There is, therefore, no doubt that the celebration of the Passover Supper was done in Corinth by families of the local synagogue and the Jewish Christians as well. Furthermore, some of the Roman laws protecting these observances mention such cities as Ephesus where we know some of the early Jewish believers still met in the synagogue for awhile—see Acts 18:26. It is common knowledge that many assemblies of the early Church among the Gentile lands would gather around a core of Jewish Christians. During the transition in the time of the book of Acts these Jewish Christians would still be in observance of the Law with all its Feast day celebrations, whereas the Gentile members of the congregation were to observe "no such thing." (Please read my next study, *"The Divisive Use of The Lord's Supper."*)

### **Christendom Tainted by Judaism**

I have presented sufficient facts to show that the early Jewish Christians observed the Passover Supper and probably even incorporated into it some of their own customs. On the other side of the coin, so to speak, Christendom has been plainly tainted by Judaism in its celebration of the so-called "Holy Communion, Eucharist, or Lord's Supper." In the book, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, F. Gavin, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, in the General Theological Seminary of New York, on pages 113 & 114, concludes his very worthy analysis of a great deal of ancient Jewish literature by saying—

"Long nourished in Judaism, Christianity began its independent life to go through the centuries bearing always in its most intimate religious observances the certain marks of its beginning. Two factors explain sacramentalism—Judaism and Jesus. For its initiatory rite (baptism) and its most solemn and sacred service (the Lord's Supper) the Christian Church felt sure of its founder's authorization, who lived as a JEW among JEWS...Before the sacrifice of Calvary the Jewish

founder of universal Christianity had His Last Supper with His Disciples, and thereafter ever since He who was a Jew is commemorated by that which was in *origin Jewish.*"

### **In Conclusion**

Many years ago when I first met some Christians who were endeavoring to walk outside of man-made denominationalism, and meet together in the simple sufficiency of the name of Jesus Christ, they told me that such ordinances as the modern "Lord's Supper" celebration was nothing more nor less than a corruption of the Jewish Passover Supper. At first I thought them to be way "out of tune" with reality—or at least with modern sectarian Christendom. But in a few years, as I studied this subject in more detail, it became increasingly clear that they were absolutely right.

Perhaps the greatest reason Christendom ignorantly misunderstood this subject is because they rejected the unique authority of the apostle to the Gentiles—Paul! Rome falsely claimed to have built its foundation upon Peter. But the Bible plainly says Peter was an apostle to the Circumcision (Gal. 2), whereas Paul was the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles. The distinctive revelations about this whole Church Age were not given to Peter, but to Paul. Paul lays the foundation for the New Body—the Church which is Christ's body, I Cor. 3:10 & 4:1 and Eph. 3:1-12. One of the main burdens Paul had was to keep the Gentiles from being deceived into practicing different forms of Judaism. Sad to say, Rome's Protestant daughters have nearly all fallen back in line with ritualism instead of recognizing the spiritual realities that we have in Christ, as ministered by Paul.

So far, in this series of articles, I have given proofs that—

- \* The Passover and the Lord's Supper are one and the same.
- \* The early Jewish Christians continued to celebrate the Jewish Passover during the book of Acts time frame.
- \* The Passover was celebrated in the homes of the Jewish believers and non-believers all over the known world in the first century.
- \* This was not done in contradiction to the Law of Moses and it was done without a Passover lamb.

As to Jesus Christ, Himself—He very specifically stated that He will NOT BE EATING THE SUPPER during this present Age—not until He returns again "to eat it new with you (His Jewish Apostles) In His Father's Kingdom," Luke 22:16, 29,30; Mark 14:25 & Matt. 26:29.

THEREFORE,  
WHAT APOSTATE CHRISTENDOM IS DOING  
THE HEAD OF THE TRUE CHURCH IS OBVIOUSLY NOT DOING!

— THE END —