

THE *MEANING* OF



GOD'S SPRING HOLY DAYS

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Introduction

WHY has God commanded us to *keep holy* certain annual Holy Days, which are listed, for example, in Leviticus 23? What possible relevance and meaning could these “ancient” Holy Days have for us today? In this booklet, you will learn the truth about the annual Holy Days and Festivals to be kept in the Spring and early Summer. These days carry a deep and rich meaning, actually revealing to us the great master plan of God for mankind. But just knowing about them academically is not enough! Blessed are those who *understand* them and actually DO them, *keeping them Holy as God made them holy!*

As an introduction, we are setting forth a very brief summary of God's annual Holy Days and Festivals that come in the Spring and early Summer. We will then describe and analyze the meaning of each of those days in much more detail. The following summary is adapted from our free booklet, “*God's Commanded Holy Days*”:

Passover

The Passover is not a Holy Day *per se*, in that we are not required to keep the entire day of Passover holy. However, Passover is observed once a year *in the evening* by engaging in a footwashing service as an example of humility in accordance with Christ's example, and partaking of the unleavened bread and wine, symbolizing physical and spiritual healing and forgiveness of sin. The entire commanded evening service symbolizes a remembrance of Christ's death (Leviticus 23:5, Luke 22:14–20; John 13:1–5; 1 Corinthians 11:20–29).

The Days of Unleavened Bread

The Days of Unleavened Bread are observed once a year by not partaking of any food prepared with leaven for a period of seven days following the Passover. The partaking of the unleavened bread symbolizes the commitment to live a

sinless life (Leviticus 23:6–8; Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8). The first and the last day of this seven-day period are annual Holy Days.

Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost is observed once a year. This Holy Day symbolizes the coming of God's Holy Spirit for the purpose of converting those called by God at this time (Leviticus 23:15–16, 21; Acts 2:1–4; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8).

With this short summary, we will now describe God's awesome purpose behind each of these annual Holy Days and Festivals in much greater detail.

repent of your sins, *believe* in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as well as in His gospel message, and begin to counsel for baptism! You *must* be baptized in order to receive God's Holy Spirit! *Only then will Christ begin to live in you.*

Once you have become a Spirit-*begotten* child in Christ at the time of your baptism, you will begin the process of your transformation—which will ultimately enable you to enter the Kingdom of God and to inherit the salvation of an eternal life. *The Feast Day of Pentecost pictures the fact that you CAN become a Spirit-begotten child in God's Family NOW—but only IF you respond to God's calling and allow God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ to guide and lead you by the GIFT of the Holy Spirit!*

Chapter 1 — The Passover

We live in an age that is filled with hatred, violence and fear. These ARE the last days of Satan's rule and of the potential destruction of all mankind. The annual Passover service has very special significance relative to mankind's liberation from Satan. Just as ancient Israel's physical liberation came after much suffering and the ultimate ruin of Egypt (Exodus, chapters 7–12), so also at the end-time, humanity will finally be freed from Satan's grip; but only after this world brings itself to the very brink of self-destruction (Matthew 24:21–22) and suffers the plagues and wrath of Almighty God (compare, for example, Revelation 16:17–21).

Great signs, including death, accompanied the first Passover and exodus of Israel from Egypt (compare Exodus 12). Likewise, our exodus from spiritual Egypt—this present evil world that is currently being ruled by Satan—to the wonderful world just ahead of us, under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ Himself, will be accompanied by great heavenly signs, as well as incredible loss of human life through warfare, famine and disease epidemics (Matthew 24:6–8, 29). This is the time prophesied by Christ as man's greatest time of trouble.

The Israelites were instructed by Moses to slay a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts of their houses, so that the death angel would not harm them when he was sent by God to strike the firstborn of Egypt (compare Exodus 12:3, 6–7, 12–13, 21–23). Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God—is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover Lamb that was slain for our sins (compare John 1:29; Revelation 5:8–13). His blood covers our sins, which have been repented of and forgiven, and it protects us from eternal death so that we don't have to pay the penalty of death for our sins.

At that fateful evening, prior to His arrest, Jesus Christ kept the Old Testament Passover with His twelve disciples; however, He instituted new symbols at that time, which replaced the symbols of the lamb and bitter herbs that were enacted in the Old Testament.

The first new ritual was that of **footwashing** (John 13:1–17), where Christ set the example of service by performing a most menial task for the benefit of His disciples. This footwashing ceremony, then, is when Church members wash the feet of their brethren, thus showing an act of love and humility and their willingness to serve and help others, as well as their willingness to accept and receive service and help from those who want to provide it.

Following the footwashing ceremony, Christ instituted the New Testament symbols of bread and wine (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

The bread which Christ ate, and which He wanted His disciples to partake of, was unleavened bread, symbolizing Christ's sinless life. When Christ *broke* the unleavened bread and handed it to the disciples to eat, it foreshadowed the pain and suffering He would have to endure, being beaten and pierced with a sword at the cross. THE BROKEN BREAD includes healing from physical pain, sickness and injury (Isaiah 53:4–5; Psalm 103:1–3; Matthew 8:16–17).

In addition, the broken bread symbolizes *spiritual* healing or reconciliation with God, as man's sins separate him from the Father (1 Peter 2:21–25; Colossians 1:19–22). Man must also be spiritually reconciled or "healed" with each other. If we devour each other (Galatians 5:14–15), we can't expect to receive physical healing from God.

We must pray fervently, in faith, for our physical healing, calling for the elders of the Church to be anointed, while at the same time asking for forgiveness of our transgressions and sins against God and against each other that might have caused or contributed to our physical sickness (James 5:14–16).

Jesus Christ also introduced the New Testament symbol of the **wine**. The wine which Christ drank, and which He wants His disciples to partake of, was **red wine**, symbolizing Christ's blood, which He shed for our sins. The wine represents a *reaffirmation* of a Christian's acceptance of the blood of Christ for the remission or forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:27–28; Romans 3:24–25; Hebrews 9:11–14; 1 John 1:7–9; 2:2).

Unleavened Passover Bread

Why does the Church of God teach that the bread during the annual Passover ceremony must be unleavened?

Christ in our hearts (compare 1 Peter 3:15); that is, have we set aside in our hearts a dwelling place for Him? Do Christ and the Father really dwell in us? Did they make their abode or home with us (compare John 14:23)?

If we do not meet or stand the test, if Christ is not living in us, we can and should get help from God to put to death the old man, and keep him dead and buried, together with his fleshly passions and desires. God will help us, through the Holy Spirit, which He promises to those who ask for it; who really want it; and who begin to obey God (Acts 5:32), showing thereby *that* they are serious about it. After we have done what is required of us, God will, through the Holy Spirit, let the New Man, Jesus Christ, begin to live in us.

Paul had to encourage the brethren in Galatia to return to the truth from which they had slipped away. He said in Galatians 4:19: "My little children, for whom I labor in birth *again* until Christ is formed in you..."

Thus we have seen through many examples how utterly important and how very significant the Holy Spirit is in guiding us away from the ways of this world. God will give us His Holy Spirit once we repent of our past sins, become properly baptized and continue to change, while repenting of sins we might commit after baptism. God is there to guide us toward that end, and we need to pray to God the Father in faith through His Son, Jesus Christ, to help us. For more information on the need to become baptized in order to receive the Holy Spirit, please read our free booklet, "*Baptism—A Requirement for Salvation?*"

Your Challenge!

On the Day of Pentecost, God poured out His Holy Spirit on the New Testament Church. We reflect on that momentous event, realizing that we can only become a new creation when God dwells in us through His Holy Spirit; that is, we can only become a new creation when Jesus Christ, the New Man, lives in us.

If you were baptized and have received God's Holy Spirit, but have begun to slip and fall, entreat God in heart-rending prayer, with fasting, and ask Him to let you return to Him. And if you have not yet been baptized as an adult person and if you have been called to the understanding of God's truth, then you must do this: You *must*

We read earlier in Galatians 5:24 that we who are Christ's have crucified the flesh and its passions and desires. Galatians 5:25 continues: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also **walk in the Spirit.**"

We are to live a *new life* "in the Spirit." We must **walk in the Holy Spirit, following its lead** (compare Romans 8:14). In so doing, we manifest the fact that it is really Jesus Christ, the New Man, who is living His life in us.

Addressing the New Man that we must become, let us continue reading once again Galatians 5:22–25 in the *Living Bible*: "But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control... Those who belong to Christ have nailed their natural evil desires to his cross and crucified them there. If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives..."

Love—the Bond of Perfection

Note a few more characteristics of the New Man—characteristics we must develop if we want to let the New Man, Jesus Christ, live His life continuously in us through the Holy Spirit. Colossians 3:12–14 states: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

Love is called here the bond of perfection. We are told in 1 John 4:17 that God's love has been perfected in us, if we love one another.

Does Christ Live in Us?

Christians are instructed in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to examine themselves as to whether they are in the faith. They are to test themselves. They are to know that Jesus Christ is living in them!

All of us who were baptized and who have received God's Holy Spirit, should ask ourselves the question: Is the New Man, Jesus Christ, really living in us? Is He guiding, directing and leading us? Do we allow Him to live our lives? Are we willing to follow His lead, regardless of where He goes (compare Revelation 14:4)? Have we sanctified Jesus

As we will see more clearly in the remainder of this booklet, the Bible makes a definite distinction between the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Both are annual Feast days, to be kept once a year. The Passover is to be observed at the beginning of the **14th day** of the first month (which month is called Abib or Nisan), according to the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16). [Abib, the original name, means "sprouting" or "budding." The name Nisan was adopted following the Babylonian captivity. The first month is comparable to the Roman calendar period of March–April, and begins, in Biblical terms, with a new moon.]

The First Day of Unleavened Bread is to be observed once a year at the beginning of the **15th day** of the first month, according to the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:6; Numbers 28:17). Remember that according to the Hebrew calendar, days start and end with sunset.

It was during the Passover night—the night of the **14th day** of the month—that the death angel **passed over** the Israelites who were in their houses (hence the name "Passover"), while killing the firstborn of the Egyptian households (Exodus 12:6–13). But it was on the 15th day, "on the day **AFTER** the Passover" or one entire day **LATER**, that the Israelites went out of Egypt, and it is on **THAT** day (at the *beginning* of the 15th day of the first month) that Church members celebrate the **Night To Be Much Observed**—"a night of solemn observance to the LORD"—when they gather together for an evening meal. On that occasion, they reflect on the events of the exodus of ancient Israel when they came out of physical slavery in Egypt, and the spiritual exodus by Church members from their slavery of sin (Exodus 12:42; Numbers 33:3).

The Night To Be Much Observed

The name, *The Night to Be Much Observed*, has been used by Church of God members in modern times. This title is taken from the *Authorized Version* as translated in Exodus 12:42: "It is a night to be much *observed* ("Shim-moor," meaning night watch, watching, vigil) unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations."

The Church of God continues to keep this beginning part of the

first Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—after sundown, which marks the start of the time God has established for His people to keep. Exodus 13, verses 3 through 10, explicitly casts God’s instructions as an ongoing regulation for those who seek to obey Him—note, in particular, verse 10: “You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.”

As is the case for all the Holy Days (which includes the weekly Sabbath), the Church of God meets together to worship God, to be taught and to fellowship. Christians are warned to carefully maintain the practice of meeting together on a regular basis: “...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

Keeping ALL that God has commanded, and not merely picking and choosing what some might choose to observe, is the only sure path for us if we desire to be ready for the Day of Christ’s return!

Today’s Jewish community is totally confused about the distinction between the Passover night and the Night to Be Much Observed. In fact, they keep the PASSOVER at the *END* of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th day, TOGETHER WITH the Night to Be Much Observed, as if the two events were one and the same. But this is not according to Scripture. These are two separate events that are to be observed at two separate times. As stated, Scripture commands that the *Passover* is to be observed at the *BEGINNING* of the 14th day, while the *Night to Be Much Observed* is to be kept at the beginning of the 15th day—one entire day LATER! God said that at the *END* of the 14th day (or the beginning of the 15th day) unleavened bread is to be eaten until the *END* of the 21st day—that is, for seven days (Exodus 12:18). Much more about this later.

So then, as the Passover is to be kept one day **before** the seven Days of Unleavened Bread starts, why should the New Testament Passover symbol of the bread be *unleavened*? For instance, many Christian organizations allow for *leavened* bread during their “communion”—which they also observe more than once a year. This is another clear violation of Scripture, as will be discussed below.

Some point out that in New Testament times, the Passover was sometimes included in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but then the

can we recognize him? How is he described in the Bible?

We have been raised together with Christ when we rise out of our watery grave at the time of our baptism. Christ is living His life in us, *through the Holy Spirit*, and we have to become a new creation, according to the image of Christ. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that **this “new man” we have to put on, is, in fact, Jesus Christ!**

Galatians 3:27 tells us: “or as many of you as were baptized into Christ *have put on Christ*.”

Romans 13:14, 12 confirms that we have, in fact, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and with Him, His “**armor of light**,” with which we can fight against all obstacles; whether these be our own human nature—the “flesh,” “the old man” that does not want to die—or whether these be the evil influences of Satan and this world around us.

Christ’s Armor of Light

We find a detailed description of **Christ’s armor of light** in Ephesians 6:11, 14–17: “Put on the whole armor of God [that is, put on Jesus Christ completely and fully], that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Stand therefore, having girded your waist with *truth*, having put on the breastplate of *righteousness*, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of *peace*; above all, taking the shield of *faith* with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation and the **sword of the Spirit**...”

Additional aspects of **Christ’s armor of light** are mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:8: “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*, and as a helmet the *hope* of salvation.”

We are told in 1 Corinthians 13:13, that *faith, hope* and *love* will abide, but that love is the greatest among these three.

The Fruit of the Spirit...

With this background, we need to take note of Galatians 5:22–23 where we see a description of the fruit of the Holy Spirit—the fruit of the New Man, Jesus Christ living in us. We see that some of those characteristics are associated with the elements of Christ’s armor of light, but other characteristics are also listed: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

creation, to live the life of the new man (compare Ephesians 2:1–7; Colossians 2:11–13). Since we have been resurrected from the baptism or burial of our old man to live a new life, we are told to concentrate on the things of God, not on the things of this world (Colossians 3:1–2).

Our new life is hidden with Christ in God, as Colossians 3:3 says. It is “hidden” in the sense that we are not yet living in glory, as Christ is. That is why the Bible also uses the phrase “inward man” for the “new man” that is being created within us (compare 2 Corinthians 4:16).

When we spiritually die in baptism, we die to the wisdom of this world (Colossians 2:8, 20). We are no longer a part of this world and its way of thinking—we are dead to this world, and this world is dead for us. Galatians 6:14 reads in the *Living Bible*: “...Because of that cross [of Jesus Christ] my interest in all the attractive things of the world was killed long ago, and the world’s interest in me is also long dead.”

The Bible is clear, then, that we have to view ourselves as having died to the lusts and desires of the flesh, and as having been made alive with Christ to live a holy and godly life.

The New Man

Colossians 3:10 states, in the *New Revised Standard Version*: “... and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.”

This new self—this new creation or new man—is to become like Jesus Christ, who is actually the Creator of this new creation.

The *Living Bible* translates Colossians 3:9–10 very powerfully, as follows: “Don’t tell lies to each other; it was your old life with all its wickedness that did that sort of thing; now it is dead and gone. You are living a brand new kind of life that is continually learning more and more of what is right, and trying constantly to be more and more like Christ who created this new life within you.”

Ephesians 4:23–24 reads, again in the *Living Bible*: “Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature.”

Who Is the New Man?

What exactly is that “new man” that has to be put on by us? How

entire time was counted as lasting *eight days*, not just seven days. One of the reasons why the day of Passover was included as an “unleavened” day was that the Jews, when leaving their homes to go to Jerusalem, had to remove all leaven from their homes, before they left (Exodus 12:19). But this would not compel us to abstain from eating leavened bread, *per se*, during the day of Passover. Based on Scripture alone, there is NO COMMAND to remove all leaven from our houses before the first Day of Unleavened Bread. As we will see, the Scriptures only require that all leaven be removed, at the latest, DURING the Passover DAY, so that no leaven is to be seen in our houses for seven days, BEGINNING with the *evening* of the first Day of Unleavened Bread.

Still, unleavened bread must be used, when partaking of the SYMBOLS of bread and wine during *Passover*. Why is that?

There is both a spiritual and a literal reason for this command, as we will explain.

From a spiritual standpoint, leaven, during the Passover season, is symbolic of sin (Matthew 16:6, 12; Luke 12:1). Since Christ was without sin (Hebrews 4:15), to use *leavened* bread as a New Testament symbol for His broken body would not convey the spiritual significance of His *sinless* life. The same would be true for the practice of some Christian churches, which, during their weekly “communion,” don’t partake of wine at all—maybe only the ministering priest does—or they partake of white wine. However, in order to keep the symbolic meaning of the wine as representing Christ’s blood, the wine needs to be red; it needs to be received by baptized Church members during the Passover night; and in that religious setting, it must be partaken of only ONCE a year, and NOT more often than that. After all, Christ did not change the Passover, which is an *annual* celebration—He only changed the SYMBOLS to partake of DURING the annual Passover celebration.

No Leavened Bread Available

In addition, the Bible specifically prohibited the Israelites in the Old Testament from eating leavened bread together with the Passover meal. This proves that there was no leavened bread available during the Passover MEAL (as distinguished from the rest of the Passover day). As Christ and His disciples partook of the regular Passover meal that night (Luke 22:14–15), Christ would not

have had leavened bread available when He introduced the New Testament symbols during the Passover meal (Matthew 26:26). This can clearly be seen when analyzing the Scriptures of Exodus 12:8 and Deuteronomy 16:1–3.

In Exodus 12:8, God told the Israelites that they had to eat the Passover lamb (verses 3, 6) with “unleavened bread.” In Deuteronomy 16:3, God commands that “no leavened bread” shall be eaten “with it”—that is, with the Passover lamb (compare verse 2). The rendering of the *New King James Bible* is confusing here, as they break verses 2 and 3 into two paragraphs, and translate the passage of Deuteronomy 16:2–3, as follows:

“(2) Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name.

“(3) You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction...”

However, to break verses 2 and 3 into two paragraphs is arbitrary, as it cannot be found in the original. Notice how the *Tanakh* (The Jewish Bible) translates this passage, without breaking verses 2 and 3 into two paragraphs: “(2) You shall slaughter the passover sacrifice for the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD will choose to establish His name. (3) You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter (Lit. “upon it”) you shall eat unleavened bread...”

This rendition makes it very clear that nothing leavened was to be eaten with the Passover lamb; and that nothing leavened was to be eaten during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, following the day of Passover.

This proves that the bread, which Christ gave His disciples during the Passover meal, was UNLEAVENED, based on the INSTRUCTIONS in God’s Word. In following Christ’s example and the Godly commandment, we, too, must partake of unleavened bread during the annual Passover service.

Red Passover Wine

Why is red wine to be used at the Passover evening rather than grape juice?
That the wine should be red and not white, should be obvious.

babies, desire the pure milk of the word, that you *may grow* thereby.”

Ephesians 4:25–31 tells us: “Therefore, putting away lying... Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer... Let no corrupt word [or, foul language] proceed out of your mouth... *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*, by whom [which] you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor [or, loud quarreling or shouting], and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”

The Works of the Flesh

If we walk in the Spirit, having crucified the flesh with its evil lusts and desires—that old man—we are not to turn around and walk in the flesh; we are not to do the works of the flesh.

Christ tells us that our eye must be “single” (Luke 11:33–36; especially verse 34 in the *Authorized Version*), having *one* goal, *one* focus and *one* direction in our lives. James says that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8).

Before listing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23, Paul listed, by way of contrast, the works of the flesh that we should not be doing, in verses 19–21. Let us read this list in the *Living Bible*:

“But when you follow your own wrong inclinations your lives will produce these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, spiritism [that is, encouraging the activity of demons], hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger, constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your little group—and there will be wrong doctrine, envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of thing. Let me tell you again as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Paul says that when we continue to practice such works of darkness, then our old man is not really dead; and, perhaps, he never even died at all.

A New Life

Not only were we crucified and *died* in baptism, but we were also resurrected with Christ to a new life. We were resurrected to **be a new**

It is sometimes difficult to “cut off” or “pluck out” our eyes, our feet, our hands; that is, not to allow them to engage in sinful conduct. It’s like going through fire—very painful. But we are called to be living sacrifices, and as Christ says, EVERY sacrifice is seasoned—enriched, made better—through fire (Mark 9:49). Romans 6:13 tells us not to “present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

We need to use our physical members—our eyes, our hands and our feet—in a right way, not in a wrong way. Our old man, living the desires of the flesh, misused his members—the eye, the hand, the foot—in sinful ways. As a new creation, we have to use our members in ways that please God. And we can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is a constant battle, because the old man that was crucified with Christ at the time of baptism, does not want to stay dead. He wants to come to life again, and again, and again, trying to destroy the new man within us. That is why Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:31: “...I die daily.” We have to put that old man to death on a daily basis.

Put off the Characteristics of the Old Man

What exactly are the characteristics of that “old man” that we must overcome, eradicate, put to death?

Paul effectively describes this old man and his deeds in Colossians 3:5–8: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry... But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”

Paul said in Galatians 6:14 that the world had been crucified to him. The world had no interest in him anymore. Why was that? Because he had put to death the wrong or worldly use of his members, and all those things that the world delights in. And when we do that, the world loses its interest and temptation for us, even though it may scoff at and ridicule us (compare 1 Peter 4:1–4).

What, exactly, do we need to put to death? 1 Peter 2:1–2 says: “Therefore, laying aside [or: putting away, or ridding yourselves of] all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn

Christ used the wine to represent His shed *blood*, and blood is *red*—not white. Some claim, however, that Christ and His disciples did not drink fermented wine, but only grape juice.

However, when reviewing how the Jews kept the Passover meal at the time of Christ, we know that Christ and His disciples partook of fermented wine, and not of grape juice.

Erdman’s Handbook to the Bible points out, on pages 492–493:

“The Passover meal followed a fairly standard pattern in every Jewish household. First comes the opening prayer—the blessing of the cup (the first of four cups of wine passed round during the ceremony). Then each person takes herbs and dips them in salt water (see Matthew 26:23). The head of the family takes one of the three flat cakes of unleavened bread, breaks it and puts some aside. Then, in response to a question from the youngest member of the family, the story of the first Passover is recounted and Psalms 113, 114 sung. The second cup...is filled and passed round.

“Before the meal itself, all wash their hands (probably the point at which Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, John 13:4–12), grace is said and bread broken. Bitter herb dipped in sauce is distributed (this was when Jesus gave the sop to Judas, John 13:26). The climax of the ritual is the festive meal of roast lamb.

“It was after this that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper [the New Testament Passover], breaking the bread laid aside earlier and passing round the third cup of wine, the ‘cup of blessing’. The words ‘this is...’ (Matthew 26:26, 28 must mean ‘this represents...’ since he was himself there, giving the disciples the bread and the wine.) The ritual concludes with the singing of the remaining ‘Hallel’ (or Hallelujah) psalms (115–118) and the ‘Great Hallel’, Psalm 136. These psalms are probably the ‘hymn’ Matthew mentions (26:30). Then the final cup of wine is drunk.

“The setting of the Lord’s Supper at the heart of the Passover meal explains its meaning. Jesus is thinking of himself as the Passover lamb, offered up for the deliverance of his people. The wine speaks of his death, and of the new covenant it ratifies, reconciling God and man. Until he comes again, we are to remember the significance of what he has done for us.”

According to the Jewish custom at the time of Christ, the Passover

was observed by drinking *fermented wine*, not grape juice. There is no indication in Scripture that Christ and His disciples would have deviated from that custom—especially as other passages clearly show that Christ drank wine on other occasions (compare Luke 7:33–34).

Only For Baptized Members

Should only baptized members of the Church of God who have received God's Holy Spirit at the time of their baptism participate in the annual Passover service?

The Old Testament demands that no male who was uncircumcised was to participate at the Passover (Exodus 12:48). Even though physical circumcision is no longer a requirement for New Testament Christians, they are circumcised spiritually (Colossians 2:11–12; Romans 2:26–29). This can only occur through the indwelling Holy Spirit, which God gives us after proper baptism. Christ's disciples *had been* baptized (even though, in the extraordinary case of the eleven apostles, they had not yet received the Holy Spirit—they would receive it, however, on the Day of Pentecost).

During the Passover evening, Christ told Peter and the other apostles, when He proceeded to wash their feet, that they had been “bathed” or baptized (John 13:10). The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* points out that the term, “who is bathed” [or “washed” in the *Authorized Version*] means, in a “thorough sense... to wash ‘as in a bath.’” In regard to Christ's subsequent statement that the one who is bathed only needs to wash his feet, the same commentary points out that “the former word [for washing, not bathing] is [used], meaning just to wash hands or feet.”

Judas Excluded

As will be seen, Christ waited until Judas Iscariot had left before He changed the Old Testament symbol of a Passover lamb to the New Testament symbols of bread and wine. The obvious reason for Judas' exclusion from participation of the New Testament symbols of bread and wine was that Judas had not been PROPERLY baptized—his entire lifestyle and conduct showed that he did not have GODLY repentance. Judas was not qualified to participate in the new symbols—although he was present for the Passover meal and the footwashing. The symbols

A New Creation

One of the greatest achievements that the Holy Spirit can possibly accomplish in man is to help man to become a new creation. When Jesus Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, we *are* becoming a new creation.

In the *Living Bible*, 2 Corinthians 5:15, 17 reads: “He died for all so that all who live—having received eternal life from him—might live no longer for themselves, to please themselves, but to spend their lives pleasing Christ who died and rose again for them...When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!”

Galatians 6:15 reads, also in the *Living Bible*: “It doesn't make any difference now whether we have been circumcised or not; what counts is whether we really have been changed into new and different people.” Compare 1 Corinthians 7:19.

We are to become a “new creation,” which is also called “the new man.” Why new? What is supposed to be “new” about us, after we become converted Christians?

In order to become a new creation, **our old being has to die**. The *Authorized Version* calls what has to die “**the old man**.”

Before discussing what we are to become, let us first notice what we must leave behind.

Our Old Man Must Die

Romans 6:1–4, 6 points out that we, that is, our old man, has been crucified with Christ—and that he died in baptism. In Galatians 2:20, Paul makes the same claim: “I have been [that is, his old man has been] crucified with Christ; it is no longer I [the old man] who live, but Christ lives in me [that is, Christ lives in him His life of a new man or new creation].”

Galatians 5:24 adds that “...those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Those passions and desires of the flesh include our eyes, our hands, our feet—that is, if they are being used for fleshly desires. Christ tells us to symbolically “cut off” our hands or feet, or to “pluck out” our eyes, if they tempt us to sin—that is, we are to stop using our fleshly members for the purpose of sinning (Mark 9:43–48).

What Just One Man Can Do!

Acts 21:27–28; 24:5; and 28:23–31 include a powerful testimony of what just ONE MAN—the Apostle Paul—was able to do, as he followed the lead of God’s Holy Spirit. Even in prison, Paul did not cease to do what God had called him to do. But note how Paul reminds the Gentiles of how the Holy Spirit had inspired Isaiah to preach to their fathers, and that what Paul was doing then was in fulfillment of that prophecy (Acts 28:25). **God’s Work and God’s Church are NOT the work of human beings! God’s Work is done through the power and inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit** (compare Philippians 3:3; 1 Peter 1:12). We are God’s instruments, as long as we are yielding to God.

God Works in Us Through His Spirit.

We can be filled with the Spirit, just as many others before us have been (Titus 3:4–6). We are admonished to use God’s Spirit, and not to quench or extinguish it (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We are not to grieve God’s Spirit in us, either (Ephesians 4:30). Rather, if we follow the lead of God’s Spirit, we will know the truth, and the truth will make us free. We will be able to follow others, as they follow Christ, and we will also be able to see that we must not follow others, if, and to the extent that, they don’t follow Christ. We will be able to distinguish truth from error (1 John 2:26–27; 4:6).

We must allow God’s Holy Spirit in us to lead us in living our lives, and we must *GROW* in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We must not be afraid to *USE* the power of God, which dwells in us through His Holy Spirit. **We must have courage and boldness and faith and peace and joy and hope and confidence and comfort and perseverance because we KNOW that God, who lives in us through His Spirit, is mightier and greater than anyone and anything else—and we also know that nothing is impossible for the GREAT GOD whom we serve!** (Matthew 19:26).

When we follow the lead of God’s Spirit, having the faith that God WILL do what He has promised, then nothing will be impossible for us (Matthew 17:20)—always, of course, subject to God’s Will. But, when things that are normally impossible with men become possible for us because God is with us (Luke 18:27), then we must not neglect to give God the glory, knowing that all power and all glory belong to Him—forever.

of bread and wine did not apply to Judas: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56). Note that after Jesus gave Judas the “dipped” piece of bread (which was not the same as the bread representative of Christ, but it was just a part of the Passover meal, compare Psalm 41:9), “Satan entered him” (John 13:27). Judas left following the traditional Passover meal and the footwashing, but *before* the institution of the symbols of the bread and wine.

Robertson’s *Harmony of the Gospels*, page 193 ff, agrees that Christ instituted the new symbols AFTER Judas had left. But Robertson indicates on p.195 that “Luke seems to be departing from the order of Mark (and Matthew) and mentions the institution of the [symbols] earlier in the evening. It seems best to follow the chronology of Mark, who places it after the departure of Judas.”

However, a careful analysis of the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke shows that there is no inconsistency. We read in Luke 22:21 that Christ said, at the time of the institution of the New Testament symbols of bread and wine, that “the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table.” This gives the impression that Judas was still present at that time. Note, however, that the word “is” is not in the original. No verb is used here and must be supplied. Therefore, the phrase can also be properly translated, “The hand of My betrayer *was* with Me on the table,” or, “*had been* with Me on the table,” allowing for Judas’ departure BEFORE the New Testament symbols of bread and wine were introduced.

Chronology of Events

When comparing all four Gospel accounts, we find the following chronology of events:

- (1) Christ institutes the footwashing, as described in John 13. Even though verse 2 reads, in the *New King James Bible*, “supper being ended,” this is not the best translation. According to the commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*, this must be translated as, “supper being prepared, being served or going on, for that it was not ‘ended’ is plain from verse 26.” Most translations concur, rendering this phrase, “during supper” or “at supper.”
- (2) Judas leaves after the footwashing (John 13:26–30), but

before Jesus institutes the symbols of bread and wine (which are not mentioned in the Gospel of John).

- (3) Jesus institutes the New Testament symbols of bread and wine, as described in Matthew 26:26–29. Verse 26 should be translated: “After they had eaten...” or, as Ronald Knox conveys the intended meaning in his rendition: “And while they were still at table...” Compare Luke 22:20, pointing out that Christ gave the wine to the disciples “AFTER supper.” John 13:18–30 discusses the events at the beginning of, or during the Passover meal. The events in Matthew 26:26–29 occur later—when the meal is drawing to its close or has already ended. At that time, Judas had already left.

No male was allowed, in Old Testament times, to partake of the Passover, unless he was circumcised. True Christians are circumcised spiritually, in the heart, by and through the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, after proper baptism. Therefore, only properly baptized members of the spiritual body of Christ—the Church—who don’t hold grudges against anyone, and who do not have hate toward others in their hearts, are to partake of the annual symbols of bread and wine. In doing so, they reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. This teaching is supported by the fact that Jesus waited until Judas had left them, before He introduced the New Testament symbols of bread and wine.

Self-Examination

Why are Christians asked to examine themselves before they take the Passover symbols of bread and wine?

Paul tells converted Christians that they must examine themselves **before** they partake of the Passover symbols, in order to avoid eating the Passover bread and drinking the Passover wine in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27–31). The Greek word for “examine” is “*dokimazo*.” It is also used in other passages, indicating a *positive*, rather than negative application. For instance, in Luke 14:19, the person who “tests” (Greek, *dokimazo*) the oxen, had already bought them. He was not testing the oxen to decide whether or not to buy them.

Other examples of a positive examination—expecting a positive result—can be found in Romans 12:2 (“prove”); 2 Corinthians 13:5 (“examine”); Galatians 6:4 (“examine”); Ephesians 5:8–10 (“finding

areas, but God did not permit him. We see how God, through His Holy Spirit, was carefully directing where Paul was to go to preach the gospel. Why and how was Paul prevented at that time from going to some of those areas, including Ephesus and all of the recipients of the seven letters in the book of Revelation? The Bible simply does not say, but it is clear that God, through His Spirit, determined at that time, and still determines today, the timing as to when the gospel is to reach which areas.

God, through His Spirit, compels us today to preach His Word, even though the recipients of the message may NOT listen. Acts 18:1, 4–6 reports how Paul preached to the people at Corinth, although most did not heed his preaching.

Later, God did allow Paul to go to Ephesus, where he found disciples there who had been baptized by John the Baptist but had not received the Holy Spirit. Paul baptized them in, or into, the name of Jesus Christ so that they could receive the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father (Acts 19:1–6; compare Philippians 2:9–11).

Paul Being Forewarned

Subsequently, the Holy Spirit forewarned Paul repeatedly that he would become a prisoner (Acts 20:22–23; 21:4, 8–14), but Paul was determined to finish his race, even if that meant imprisonment and death (Acts 20:24–28).

Later, Christ appeared to Paul, perhaps in a dream or in a vision, to let him know that He approved of his conduct (Acts 23:11). So, the Holy Spirit was not trying to influence Paul not to go—rather, it was a test for Paul, whether he was willing to go all the way in the face of persecution and imprisonment, or to give up.

It is God, through His Holy Spirit, who ordains ministers and places them in various responsibilities or offices in the Church of God. But Paul pointed out, prior to his travel to Jerusalem, that some false ministers and members would rise up to deceive (Acts 20:29–30). God had NOT ordained them nor placed them in His Church. But God allowed them to come into the Church to test the true believers. This is still true today, as it was then (Compare Jude 3–4, 12, 19; 2 Peter 2:1–3; 1 Timothy 4:1–2, 6; 2 Timothy 2:15–17, 20–21).

“a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher.” It was by the direction of the Holy Spirit that they were separated—set apart—for a certain work. No man did it on his own. The men were following God’s lead through the Holy Spirit when they ordained Paul and Barnabas as apostles.

Even when Paul and Barnabas were sent out for their task, this was done by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4).

During their missionary journeys, they would encounter all kinds of strange people. At one time, they met a sorcerer who withstood them and tried to persuade others not to follow them. But Paul commanded him boldly to cease from his evil conduct. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit and he KNEW that God would back him up (Acts 13:8–11).

Due to the BOLD preaching of Paul and Barnabas, the Church membership grew (Acts 13:46–52).

Early Doctrinal Controversy

In Acts 14, we read about a spectacular miracle performed at the hands of Paul and Barnabas. It was through the power of God’s Holy Spirit that they were able to do such a mighty work. After Paul and Barnabas had healed a cripple in the city of Lystra, the Gentiles of the city regarded them as Greek gods, calling Barnabas Zeus, the king of the gods, and Paul Hermes, the godly messenger. Paul and Barnabas were appalled by this, of course, telling the Gentiles that they were just ordinary men just like them—not pagan gods.

Following this episode, another controversy arose in the Church—this time over the question of circumcision. The issue was simply this: Must Gentiles become physically circumcised before they could become baptized, receive the Holy Spirit and be allowed to enter the community of believers? This question was brought before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, as reported in Acts 15. After MUCH disputing, Peter spoke, followed by Barnabas and Paul, and finally by James, who declared the final judgment, stating that Gentiles need not be circumcised. But, notice how the apostles arrived at this judgment—it was not the arbitrary decision of just one man, but rather it had been clearly revealed to every one present, *by the Holy Spirit* (Acts 15:22–29).

God Directs His Work Through His Spirit

Acts 16:6–10 informs us that Paul wanted to travel through certain

out”); Philippians 1:9–10 (“approve”); 1 Thessalonians 2:4 (“approved” and “tests”) and 1 Peter 1:6–7 (“tested,” not for the purpose of failure, but with expectation of success).

Take the Passover!

A Christian needs to EXAMINE himself before taking the Passover, but **he is told to “eat of the bread and drink of the cup”** (1 Corinthians 11:28). So, the examination should establish that he IS on the right track—that Christ DOES live in him. And if, during the examination, a Christian finds that he is lacking in some aspects, he needs to REPENT of that; he needs to ask God for forgiveness; he needs to resolve and make an effort to do better; and, at the same time, he needs to understand that with God’s help, he can, and must, and *will* do better.

On the other hand, a Christian CANNOT take the Passover **in an unworthy manner, or unworthily**. He needs to examine himself before the Passover to make sure that he DOES NOT partake of it in an unworthy manner, but rather, that he takes it in a WORTHY manner.

What did Paul mean, when he used the phrase, “unworthily,” or, “in an unworthy manner” (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29)?

The Greek word for “unworthily” is “*anaxios*.” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [“*Strong’s*”] defines it also as, “irreverently.”

This Greek word is an adverb. It is a combination of two words, “*an*” and “*axios*.” “*An*” means “not,” and “*axios*” means “worthy,” or, if used as an adverb, “worthily.” *Strong’s* defines it also as, “appropriately,” or “after a godly sort.”

So, the word “*an-axios*” means “not worthily,” “not appropriately,” or “not in a godly way.”

In a Worthy Manner!

The Passover must be taken in a worthy or appropriate or godly manner.

But how can this be?

Clearly, Paul did not mean that anyone is WORTHY to take the Passover in the sense that he is entitled to forgiveness, that God owes it to him to forgive his sins because of his righteous works and perfect lifestyle. The opposite is clearly expressed in passages such as Romans 3:19–20, 23.

Paul did not mean, either, that anyone is WORTHY to partake of the Passover symbols now BECAUSE he is already perfect. If he were already without sin today, he would not need to partake of the Passover once a year. All are in need of God's forgiveness of their sins on a continuous basis, as ALL—converted or not—still commit sin from time to time (compare 1 John 1:8–10).

We are told that *all* have sinned; that *all* still sin; and that God forgives us our sins because of His grace, His free gift, His unmerited, undeserved pardon, through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23).

What DID Paul mean, then, when he asked Christians to examine themselves so that they do NOT partake of the Passover symbols in an unworthy manner?

Act Worthily!

Let us note how the word "*axios*," that is, "worthily," is used in Scripture:

We are told in Ephesians 4:1 that we are to "walk worthy" or "worthily" of our calling. Verses 2 and 3 tell us how we do that. We live and walk worthily of our godly calling if we show lowliness, gentleness and longsuffering; when we bear with one another in love; when we have, or pursue, peace and unity among ourselves. If we don't live that way, or at least try to live that way, we are NOT walking worthily of our calling.

We are also told in Colossians 1:10 to "walk worthy" or "worthily" of God. Paul gives additional clues as to how to do this (compare verses 9–12), and Christians who examine themselves, should ask the following questions:

Are we being filled with, and increasing in, the knowledge and spiritual understanding of God and His Will for us?

Do we fully please Him?

Are we strengthened with God's might and His glorious power?

Do we have godly patience and longsuffering?

Can we rejoice in trials?

Do we give God thanks always because He has qualified us to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints?

And last, but not least, are we *fruitful in every good work*?

We are told in Philippians 1:27 that we are to conduct ourselves

to all of the disciples, that He had called GENTILES into the body of Christ (compare Acts 11:15–18).

Later, in Acts 15:8–9, Peter recounted this experience, stating that "God who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

Returning to Acts 10:38, Peter had also pointed out that Jesus Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. Christ had the Holy Spirit—without measure—from His conception (John 3:34; *Authorized Version*). But at the time of His baptism, Christ received additional power from God to do mighty miracles. He could only do that through the Spirit of power emanating from God the Father. We read in Acts 10:38 that through the "power" of God's Spirit, God the Father "was with Him" to go "about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil."

Barnabas

In Acts 11:22, we are introduced again to Barnabas, who was already mentioned in Acts 4:36 and Acts 9:27. His name means "son of encouragement." He was a Levite, one of those who sold his possessions to give them to the apostles (Acts 4:36–37). He was also the one who brought Paul to the apostles after Paul's conversion, when everybody else was afraid of him (Acts 9:26–27). Barnabas was a good man (Acts 11: 24) because he was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

Barnabas and Saul

We read in Acts 11:29–30 that Barnabas and Saul were chosen by the elders to bring physical relief to the brethren in Jerusalem who were faced with a prophesied famine. They knew that such relief was needed because the Holy Spirit inspired certain prophets to foresee the future and proclaim what would happen soon (Acts 11:27–28).

Later, Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, where they were ordained, apparently, as apostles (Acts 13:1–3). They were subsequently referred to as apostles—they were not called that before (Acts 14:4, 14).

Note that Acts 13:1 says that Paul, or Saul, and Barnabas were "prophets and teachers." In 2 Timothy 1:11, Paul refers to himself as

returning. God's Spirit motivated Philip to teach the man so that he could be baptized (Acts 8:29). Presumably, Philip had become an ordained minister by that time.

Following that, the Spirit of God actually transported Philip to another place on this earth (Acts 8:39–40; compare for similar events, Ezekiel 3:12, 14–15; 2 Kings 2:16; 1 Kings 18:12. See also Matthew 4:5–6).

The Conversion of Saul

In the meantime, Saul continued to persecute the Church, until, on his way to Damascus, Christ appeared to him in a vision. Christ showed him where he was wrong, and blinded him. The disciple Ananias, living in Damascus, had a vision in which Christ ordered him to heal Saul (Acts 9:17–18). Saul who would now be called Paul, was baptized and was filled with God's Spirit. Rather than persecuting the Church, he began, in due time, to preach God's way of life.

The Church increased in numbers as the Church members were "walking in the fear of the LORD and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31). When we are discouraged, God's Spirit gives us comfort and encouragement. Rather than giving up, we are motivated to go on, to persevere. We read in John 14:16–17 that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter, which will abide in us forever, if we allow it. Romans 15:13 tells us that the Holy Spirit of power gives us hope, joy, peace and faith. Once we *know* that we have God's power residing in us, we *can* have hope, joy, peace and faith.

Now the time had come when God would bring Gentiles into His Church. He gave Peter a vision to let him know that every person who is called by God should be given access to the community of believers (Acts 10:17–23, 28, 34–38).

The Conversion of Cornelius

We read in Acts 10:44–48 that, even though Cornelius and his household had already received the Holy Spirit, Peter still commanded baptism as an outward sign that they HAD accepted God's decision to bring Gentiles into the Church. Normally, one does not receive the Holy Spirit without having been baptized first. God made a unique exception here, to make absolutely clear, not just to Peter, but also

"worthy" or "worthily" of the gospel. We do that, as the same passage explains, when we stand fast in one Spirit and in one mind; and when we strive together for the faith of the gospel. There should not be divisions in the spiritual body of Christ. All should be of one mind (compare Psalm 133:1).

Also, we live worthily of the gospel, if we don't become terrified by our adversaries (verse 28). Our lifestyle will reflect our faith—we KNOW that God will take care of them and us—we KNOW that attacks from our enemies are a PROOF for us that God will give salvation to us, but perdition to them.

Fruits Worthy of Repentance

Luke 3:7–8 stresses that we must bear fruits worthy of repentance. Although the Greek word for "worthy," "*axios*," is not used as an adverb, the meaning is the same: A truly repentant person will live a lifestyle that shows his repentance. He will live WORTHY of his repentance. If he continues living in sin and is not concerned about getting rid of his sin, he does not bear fruits worthy of repentance. We must be fruitful in good work—showing that we have repented AND that we are producing fruits and good works, which are worthy of repentance.

If we examine Christ's messages to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation, we find that Christ did not have much good to say about the dead church of Sardis. But He did say that there were a few exceptions in Sardis, and that they were counted worthy (in Greek, *axios*) to receive white garments (Revelation 3:4); that is, God's righteousness, and the assurance that their names would not be blotted out from the Book of Life, because they OVERCAME (verse 5). They were worthy in God's eyes, because they overcame!

What did they overcome?

- (a) They overcame the world (compare 1 John 5:4–5). Our faith must be in Christ who alone is able to help us become victorious (compare John 16:33; Revelation 3:21).
- (b) They overcame Satan, the "wicked one," and his demons and their wrong ideas (1 John 2:14). They overcame Satan because they had God's Word living in them, and, as a consequence, they did not love the world and the things of this world (1 John 2:14–17). They overcame Satan by accepting Christ's

sacrifice, living by God's Word, and by not loving "their lives to the death," if that would mean compromising with the truth (Revelation 12:10–11).

(c) They overcame evil in general (Romans 12:21). Evil includes the evil society around us, Satan and his evil influences, as well as our own evil selfish nature and desires.

We can only overcome if Christ lives in us, and gives us the power to do so. But we must follow His lead. We must let Him help us to do the overcoming (1 John 4:4; 1 Corinthians 15:57).

Romans 16:1–2 tells us that we live in a manner worthy of the saints, if we HELP them in times of need.

Unworthy Living

We live **unworthily** of God and His calling when we don't manifest in our lives those characteristics that we have discussed—if we are not willing to let God develop those characteristics in us.

We are told in Matthew 22:8 that those who were originally invited did not come to the wedding because they were UNWORTHY (Greek: *ouk axios*, meaning, "not worthy").

Why did they not come? Why were they not worthy?

Verse 5 explains that they showed through their conduct—how they lived—that they did not really want to be at the wedding. They were making light of the invitation, of Christ's sacrifice and of God's Holy Spirit.

We also find a sobering warning in Hebrews 10:26–29, where certain people are "thought worthy" or reckoned worthy by God of severe punishment (verse 29). As the passage explains, these are those people who count the blood of Christ a common thing; who are trampling the Son of God under foot; and who are insulting the Spirit of grace, by not allowing God to develop in them—through His Spirit—godly, righteous character.

Counted Very Worthy

Matthew 10:11–13 tells us that if God thinks a household is worthy, He will give it inner peace—the same peace that the apostles had. And Matthew 10:37–39 tells us that if God thinks we are worthy of Christ, and we do so by loving God more than anything else, including our

and testify for God and to answer their accusers. But, the Holy Spirit is only granted to those who respond to God's call and who show a willingness to obey His Word. Peter was telling his accusers, in effect, You don't have the Holy Spirit, and you won't receive the Holy Spirit, unless you repent and begin to obey God (compare verses 30–32).

Now, problems arose within the Church, causing the apostles to realize that they had to ordain some of the members as deacons to take care of physical matters so that the ministry could continue to pray, preach and teach the Word (Acts 6:1–7). The candidates had to be full of the Holy Spirit. Once the internal problem within the Church had been taken care of, the Word of God spread again, and the number of the disciples increased greatly.

The Deeds of Stephen

Stephen, one of the original seven deacons, did great miracles as the Holy Spirit within him empowered him (Acts 6:8). Stephen's actions brought persecution upon him, but his accusers could not resist his wisdom as the Holy Spirit inspired him (Acts 6:10).

Nevertheless, they dragged him before the Jewish court and he gave testimony to them. He ended his defense with a challenging and bold claim against his accusers and judges, (Acts 7:51–54). And, through the revelation of God's Spirit, he was even granted, just prior to his murder, to see—in a vision—heaven opened (Acts 7:55–58).

The Deeds of Philip

Following Stephen's death, Saul began to persecute the Church. This caused a great scattering of the disciples, so that they went everywhere preaching the Word. Philip, another one of the original seven deacons, went to Samaria to preach there (Acts 8:5), but since he was not yet an ordained minister, he could not lay hands on baptized persons, which meant that they did not receive the Holy Spirit at that time. It was necessary for the apostles to lay hands on the baptized individuals. And so, we are told in Acts 8:14–16, that the laying on of hands by the ministry is necessary, after baptism, to bestow on a person the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Subsequently, Philip was inspired by God's Spirit to meet the Ethiopian eunuch who had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was

Holy Spirit, who healed the man, as Peter explains in verse 16 (compare Zechariah 4:6; Luke 5:17; Luke 6:19; Luke 8:43–46).

Persecution Starts

In due time, after the apostles had begun to preach God’s Word powerfully, they encountered resistance and persecution from the religious establishment (Acts 4:1–10).

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he gave his defense. Christ had promised him and all of His disciples ahead of time that they would be motivated and inspired by the *Holy Spirit* to say the right things when dragged before the courts of this world (compare Matthew 10:19–20, 23).

After the apostles were beaten and then released from prison, they went to the Church to report to them what had happened. Rather than being discouraged, all the disciples prayed to God for more strength and wisdom to preach the word, and God responded very powerfully (Acts 4:29–31, 33)!

Unfocused “Brethren”

But not everyone attending with the brethren was really converted. Some had come for wrong or ulterior motives. They wanted to be part of the Church that had become noticeable and powerful, but their heart was not right. They thought, perhaps, that it was the great work of a man, not realizing that it was GOD who was behind it.

We find a frightening record of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–3. They lied to the disciples, falsely pretending to be generous donors; but they had not lied merely to men—they had lied to God the Father and Jesus Christ who were present through the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:9)! As a consequence, God let them die right then and there. Although men can deceive other men, they cannot deceive God. We can learn from this episode that God will manifest the secrets of the heart and the real motives—now, or later.

As time went on, additional persecution resulted from the Church’s activities. The apostles were arrested, but then supernaturally freed by an angel. Rather than fleeing, they went right back into the temple to preach—an act that resulted in their arrest again (Acts 5:26–32). It was the *Holy Spirit* of power and boldness that inspired them to preach

own physical lives, He will give us eternal life.

If God counts us worthy (in Greek, *kataxio*, “reckoned very worthy”), we will escape the Great Tribulation (Luke 21:36), which will come upon this world in the not-too-distant future (See our free booklet, “*The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord*”). We will also become immortal God beings in the Family of God (Luke 20:35–36 (in Greek, *kataxio*)).

When we suffer for the Kingdom of God, then God will count us **VERY worthy** to have a place in His kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:3–5; Acts 5:41; in Greek, *kataxio*). When we suffer shame for Christ and His name, then God will count us VERY worthy to allow us to do so, proving that we will be in His kingdom.

Paul tells converted Christians to examine themselves, as to how they are doing, *and to take* the Passover. They need to do so in a worthy manner, or worthily. They need to understand and appreciate what the sacrifice of Christ really means. They must be willing to live their lives worthy of God and of their calling.

Discern the Lord’s Body

What did Paul mean when he told the Church to discern the Lord’s body (1 Corinthians 11:29)?

In the passage in question, Paul was addressing the yearly Passover ceremony. Beginning in 1 Corinthians 11:23, Paul was reminding the disciples of the event when Christ instituted the New Testament symbols of bread and wine at the annual Passover service (compare verses 23–26). He then continued, in verses 27–30:

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”

As we have seen, the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ includes His death for the forgiveness of our sins, as well as His suffering for our physical healing. While the symbol of the wine points to Christ’s shed blood for the forgiveness of sins, the symbol of the bread points to His physical suffering for our physical healing.

Christ's Physical Body

When Paul talked about the need that we discern the Lord's body, he was addressing Christ's PHYSICAL body, which was beaten for our physical healing. Some have said that Paul was talking about Christ's SPIRITUAL "broken" body, the Church. They claim that Paul wanted to make reference to the broken, shattered condition of the Church (having in mind many different corporate Church organizations). They teach that we don't experience physical healing if we are responsible for any of the divisions in the different Church organizations, thereby failing to "discern" the spiritual body of Christ—the Church.

It is true that we cannot expect to be healed if we refuse to be spiritually reconciled or "healed" with God and with His people. It is also true that we cannot expect physical healing if we don't repent of our sins and trespasses or refuse to forgive our brethren their trespasses against us (James 5:13–16). However, this does not mean that Paul was addressing our discernment of the Church, as Christ's body, in 1 Corinthians 11. Rather, he spoke clearly of the idea that we must consider the totality of Christ's Sacrifice—including His broken PHYSICAL body—if we want to experience physical healing.

Note the Context

Let us again notice the context: Paul quotes Christ in verse 24, saying that we are to eat bread, "which is [or, which symbolizes] My body which is broken for you." We are obviously not to "eat" the Church, but we are to internalize Jesus Christ in our lives so that He can live in us continuously (compare Galatians 2:20). That is why we read in John 6:48–58 that converted Christians need to partake of the annual Passover symbols of bread and wine to have a continued part with Christ. We are also told in 1 Corinthians 11:26 that we proclaim the death of Christ until He returns, when we eat the bread and drink the wine on the annual occasion of the Passover service. Obviously, Paul was not addressing the Church in verse 26, but the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Paul continues with the same theme in verse 27: "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner..."

Again, there is no hint that Paul was suddenly talking about anything else but Christ's physical body—it was CHRIST Who was tortured

Cornelius and his family—and in Acts 19:1–6, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on those who had only been baptized into John the Baptist, but not into the name of Jesus Christ. In these cases, God wanted to make it very obvious that the individuals received the Holy Spirit at that time.

Peter's Sermon

In Acts 2, Peter explained that the giving of the Holy Spirit had been prophesied in the Old Testament, and that the miracle that had just occurred was the *forerunner* of mightier miracles which would still occur in the future (Acts 2:14–21).

This prophecy of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in most powerful ways on many more disciples is still to be fulfilled, in its fullness, in the future. But Peter explained here that the process had *started*. The giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in 31 AD to the Church had begun to set in motion developments necessary to bring about the end-time fulfillment of that prophecy.

Peter also told his stunned audience that it was they who had crucified Christ, their future Lord and King (Acts 2:36). When they heard this, they were "cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37), and when they asked what to do, he said in Acts 2:38–39 that everyone was to repent and be baptized in order to receive forgiveness of sins and the GIFT of the Holy Spirit.

God needs to call us, individually, to salvation; however, not everyone is being called at this time. But once we *are* called and respond to the call, we can be saved when we REPENT and BELIEVE in Christ's sacrifice. Our faith is manifested by outward baptism, and then, we WILL receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as the early disciples did in 31 AD.

We read in verse 47: "...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." It is still God who does it all. He calls, and when people respond to the call, HE adds them to His Church.

And so, God did not cease to back up the activities of His disciples with mighty miracles. In Acts 3:1–12, we read about a powerful healing through Peter and John.

This healing was done, NOT by the power of man, BUT by the POWER of the Holy Spirit. It was CHRIST, through the power of the

demons, he had still fallen away. The remaining eleven apostles cast lots between two candidates who had been with them from the beginning, to determine who should replace Judas. The apostles were reminded that the betrayal through Judas, and his replacement through another, had been prophesied by God through His Holy Spirit (Acts 1:16).

This is the last time we read in Scripture that lots were cast to determine God's Will. Here, they did so, as they did not yet have the Holy Spirit, which would be guiding them and leading them into the truth. It appears that, left to themselves, they might have chosen the wrong candidate, as Joseph is named first in Acts 1:23. God, though, chose the other candidate, Matthias. Subsequent to that, the *Holy Spirit*—not lots—would inspire God's ministers to see who should be ordained. For instance, we read in Acts 13:1–3, how God, through the power of *His Holy Spirit*, chose Barnabas and Saul for a special responsibility in His Work.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

In Acts 2, we are introduced to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost, on the Church of God (Acts 2:1–4). This happened on June 17, 31 AD, exactly 50 days from the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread when the wave sheaf was waived and when Christ ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit is symbolized here by a mighty WIND. In John 20:22, Christ had told the disciples, when He *breathed* on them, that they would receive the Holy Spirit very soon—comparing the Spirit with air.

Speaking in Tongues

When the Holy Spirit was given, the disciples *spoke* with other tongues, or languages, as the SPIRIT inspired them to do (Acts 2: 4), and the people heard and UNDERSTOOD them each in their own language (verses 6–8). This speaking and hearing of foreign languages was a miracle.

God performed such a unique miracle on that occasion to prove to everyone there that He had indeed poured out His Holy Spirit on the Church in Jerusalem. Only two similar incidents of “speaking in tongues” are reported, which occurred subsequently, namely in Acts 10:44–46, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on GENTILES—

and killed. Verse 28 continues that converted Christians must eat the bread and drink the cup after self-examination. Verse 29 warns us that we eat and drink judgment to ourselves if we don't eat the bread and drink the wine in a worthy manner, “not discerning the Lord's body.” It is still the same theme and context; and to say that Paul suddenly addressed the Church as Christ's [spiritual] body, while still talking about eating the bread and drinking the wine, is introducing a thought which is clearly not contained in that passage. After all, if the “Lord's body” was suddenly meant to refer to the spiritual body of Christ—the Church—are we to EAT the CHURCH (verse 29)? And what would the meaning of the “blood” be in that context (same verse)—as we are to eat AND to drink? It is obvious that the analogy of Christ's body referring to the Church simply does not fit in 1 Corinthians 11:29.

The *Bible Commentary: Revised* agrees: “Every Christian is unworthy, but Paul defines his meaning as not discerning (lit. not distinguishing) this bread as signifying the body...of the Lord. Some think body here refers to the church (cf. 10:17), but a change of meaning from v. 27 seems unlikely.”

Matthew Henry's Commentary concurs: “The Corinthians came to the Lord's table not discerning the Lord's body—not making a distinction between that and common food.”

Unger's Bible Handbook explains the meaning of the passage in this way: “in an unworthy manner ... means in an attitude of unconfessed sin, and thus being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, transgressing against the very essence of the meaning of Christ's death... Self-examination is necessary...to avoid condemnation and consequent chastening, entailing physical weakness, sickness and even death.”

Christ Suffered and Died in His Body

During the annual Passover ceremony, when Christians partake of the bread and the wine (as well as participate in the preceding foot-washing ceremony), they must understand and accept, in faith, the supreme meaning of the totality of Christ's Sacrifice. If they discern Christ's body, with the knowledge that CHRIST was severely beaten and then killed on our behalf, they understand that they can have forgiveness of their sins, as well as physical healing, because of what Christ did for us:

“...having made peace through the BLOOD of His cross...now He has reconciled [you to the Father] in the BODY of HIS FLESH THROUGH DEATH, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you CONTINUE in the faith...” (Colossians 1:20–23).

And: “By that will [of God the Father] we have been sanctified through the offering of the BODY of Jesus Christ once and for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

And finally 1 Peter 2:24: “...who Himself bore our sins in His own BODY on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.”

The message rings loud and clear! As Christ suffered and died for us in His own body, we are to discern His sacrifice and let Him live in us, so that we can live for Him.

Sickness and Death

Is it correct that by taking the Lord's Sacrifice in an unworthy manner, the consequences might result in physical sickness and death?

As we may recall, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:29–30: “For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”

Paul speaks about the manner in which Christians partake of the Passover—and yes, if they partake of the Passover in an unworthy manner, and if they, especially, fail to discern the body of Christ, which was beaten for our healing from our sicknesses, then prolonged sickness and even death might be the consequence.

It is important to study the context of these verses as found in 1 Corinthians 11:17 through 34. Paul very emphatically corrected those in Corinth who had been treating the Passover in an irreverent and self-centered manner. He mentions that there were divisions within the Church (verses 18–19). Beginning with the early chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul strongly warns against the divisions that were arising—especially those that were created by some members who focused on the personalities of various ministers (Compare 1 Corinthians 1:11–13; 3:1–23).

Passover Not the Lord's Supper

Here is, what Paul states in 1 Corinthians 11:20: “Therefore when

Spirit in us enables us to obey the truth, as Peter explains:

“...you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...” (1 Peter 1:22).

We must never underestimate or forget the fact that **Jesus Christ is leading, guiding and motivating His people through His Holy Spirit within them.** This is true individually, as well as collectively in regard to His Church, the “Body of Christ.”

How the Holy Spirit Guided the Early New Testament Church

As we already mentioned, it was on the Day of Pentecost that God poured out His Holy Spirit on His called out and chosen people. How did the Holy Spirit affect the early Christians? Since God is not a respecter of persons, we should realize, then, in what way the Holy Spirit dwelling in us can affect, motivate and lead us today.

We read in Acts 1:4–5, 8, that Christ gave instructions to the apostles to stay in Jerusalem. Christ told them that they would receive the same Spirit that He had—the Spirit that had been promised by the Father.

Once they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, they would have the POWER to be Christ's witnesses, *beginning* in Jerusalem, but ultimately encompassing the entire earth (Luke 24:46–49). Jesus clearly enlarged the territory that He had originally given to the apostles in Matthew 10:5–6, when He instructed them earlier: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

They were to be baptized through the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ—the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). They were to become part of an organism that was to do a job—to be witnesses of Christ, preaching the good news *to all nations*.

The word for “witness” is the same as the word for “martyr.” If we want to work for Christ, we must be willing and ready even to die for Him, if need be.

The Replacement of Judas

Judas, one of the twelve apostles, had betrayed Christ and then committed suicide, so he needed to be replaced. Although Judas had been an apostle, and although he had received the power from Jesus to preach the gospel, to baptize people, to heal the sick and to cast out

He adds in Ephesians 3:20–21: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church.”

Paul explains that God the Father lives in us through the Spirit of His mighty power, the same power mentioned before, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:19–20).

With God’s power working in our lives, “nothing will be impossible” for us (Matthew 17:20). Even though it may be impossible for ordinary and unconverted men, it will not be impossible for God’s converted people, because GOD will be with them, and we KNOW that “**with God all things are possible**” (Matthew 19:26; compare Luke 1:37). But, we must believe it (Mark 9:23)! We must BELIEVE that all things are possible for God (Mark 14:36) and that, therefore, all things are possible for us, since God lives in us.

As God created and fashioned the universe and the earth with His mighty Spirit of power, so WE will also participate in future creative acts, since God will share His power with us, when we become born-again members in the Family of God. He already does so to an extent today, but **He will share ALL of His power with us, when we enter His kingdom** (For more information, please read our free booklet, “*God Is A Family.*”)

We must learn today to apply God’s power in our lives—to use that portion that God has given to us in order to overcome. God wants to see how we handle it today. He needs to be sure that He can entrust us with limitless power later without running the risk of misusing that power and turning against Him, as Lucifer and his angels once did, ultimately becoming Satan and demons (For more information, please read our free booklet, “*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World.*”)

How are we to prove to God today that we will never abuse His power in the future?

By allowing His Spirit in us to motivate and enable us to keep God’s law (Ezekiel 11:19–20; Numbers 14:24). God’s

you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.” We understand this verse to say that they could not, and should not try, to eat the Lord’s Supper, as the Passover is not the Lord’s Supper—that is, it is not a meal! Paul was chastising them for trying to eat a supper or a meal, rather than *just partaking of the symbols of bread and wine* in a worthy manner. He plainly chastises the Church for assembling in a way that nullified the intent and example of observing the New Testament Passover as instituted by Jesus Christ. Paul challenges their practice of using this time for a common meal; of getting drunk; and of adding to the division between members who were wealthy and poor because of their degenerated observance of the Passover.

In verses 23 through 26 of 1 Corinthians 11, Paul carefully reminds the Church of the correct way to observe this time—not as a riotous, self-indulgent meal, but as a meaningful reminder of the glorious sacrifice made by Jesus on behalf of mankind. In verse 26, Paul states: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” The correct observance of these symbols, along with observing the time established by God for the Passover, is to be faithfully followed by the New Testament Church. As we see from verse 23, Jesus instituted the symbols at this same specified time as an example for the Church.

A Powerful Warning

Next, Paul gives a powerful warning that no Christian should take lightly: “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27). Continuing in verses 29–30: “For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [are dead].”

Although the application is much broader, we may, nonetheless, apply what is stated in Hebrews concerning those who take for granted the inestimable sacrifice of Jesus Christ: “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or

three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:26–29).

Paul warned the Church at Corinth that their actions were seriously and dangerously wrong! Like the message in Hebrews, the people in Corinth were treating the Passover as a "common thing"—that is, just another meal, and, even worse, as an activity of the Church in which rebellious actions were taking place. We find an Old Testament parallel in the story of the golden calf. In their idolatry, the children of Israel made a proclamation that their observance was "a feast to the LORD" (Exodus 32:5). They brought upon themselves both an immediate penalty of death for some (verse 28) and a future punishment for their sin (verses 34–35).

Disobeying God *WILL* lead to death. The only exception is through repentance and forgiveness, and **our repentance and God's forgiveness are only possible because of the death of Jesus Christ in our place.** He paid the ultimate penalty, and His sacrifice is not a meaningless ritual. The Passover must not be taken lightly. Rather, a Christian must approach this observance carefully, through sincere personal reflection and self-examination.

In another letter to the Corinthians, Paul states: "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5). This is essentially what he had told them to do regarding the Passover Christ established: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28). Continuing in 1 Corinthians 11:31–32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."

Being "chastened by the Lord" is exactly the purpose that was accomplished through Paul's writing. It applied to the members in Corinth, and it applies to us, today. Christians are to examine themselves in order to properly take the Passover—to do as Jesus Christ commanded. Indeed, some, both then and even now, have failed to properly discern the Lord's body—having been beaten for our

disciples at the time He breathed on them. Rather, it was a reassurance to them that they would receive the Holy Spirit later—on the Day of Pentecost, as described in Acts 2.

What Is God's Holy Spirit, First and Foremost?

God's Holy Spirit is, first and foremost, a Spirit of POWER. With God's power, we *CAN* overcome sin! With God's power, we *CAN* live a life pleasing to God. (Please don't assume, however, that the Holy Spirit is a Person. It is not! For proof, please read our free booklet, "*Is God a Trinity?*")

With the POWER of God's Holy Spirit, we *CAN* keep the Law of the Ten Commandments, which God gave to the ancient Israelites under Moses, according to tradition, on the Day of Pentecost. And so, God gave spiritual Israel—His Church—the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to enable them to KEEP His Law.

Power to Obey

We would like to quote from pages 74 and 75 of our free booklet, "*Teach Us To Pray,*" in order to briefly describe God's power that He bestows on His disciples through the gift of His Holy Spirit:

We read in Isaiah 40:29 that God "gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength." He gives strength and power to His people (Psalm 68:35). For converted Christians, the gift of God's power reaches an additional important dimension: God shares His very power already today with His begotten sons and daughters through the Holy Spirit dwelling within them:

Micah exclaimed in Micah 3:8: "I am full of power BY the Spirit of the LORD." Christ promised His disciples that they would be "endued with power from high" (Luke 24:49) and that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon" them (Acts 1:8).

Once we have received God's Holy Spirit, the power that we might potentially enjoy is beyond all human comprehension. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

[promising them the receipt of the Holy Spirit IN THE FUTURE], while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." When Christ was taken up to heaven, His apostles and disciples had not yet received the Holy Spirit; but they were commanded to wait in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) for the receipt of the Holy Spirit "not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). And as we saw, it was in Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost, when they received the Holy Spirit.

While still in the flesh, Christ had promised His disciples on several occasions that the Holy Spirit would be given to them in the future (compare John 14:17, 26; 16:13). That actual event, and the fulfillment of that promise, occurred when the New Testament Church came into existence—on the Day of Pentecost—not before then.

How, then, are we to understand John 20:22? We read, beginning in verse 21: "So Jesus [when He was resurrected, but *before* He had ascended to heaven, and *before* the Day of Pentecost] said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'

"Receive the Holy Spirit!"

Continuing in verse 22: "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Verse 23 continues to quote Christ's words: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Since the Holy Spirit was not given before the Day of Pentecost, Christ's statement and action in John 20 was a *reassurance* that they would receive the Holy Spirit not long from then. Christ breathed upon them, showing them that it would be HE who would pour out, directly, the Holy Spirit on them, after He would receive it from the Father (Acts 2:33; John 14:16–17). And since the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power and of discernment, they would receive the strength and ability to witness for Christ and preach the gospel, as well as recognize whether someone had repented and therefore had received forgiveness from God, or whether God had not forgiven the person, due to a lack of repentance. Christ told His apostles that they would be able, because of the Holy Spirit within them, to discern God's Will in the matter of forgiveness, and to communicate and implement God's Will accordingly.

John 20:22 does not teach that Christ gave the Holy Spirit to His

healing—and they might, thereby, have suffered the consequence of physical sickness, and perhaps even death. They, like Israel of old, have *brought upon themselves penalties for their sins*. We can avoid these consequences if we seek to obey zealously what God has commanded!

Manifold Reasons for Sickness and Death

This is not to say—by any means—that God is punishing every Church member who is suffering from an illness because of a lack of discernment of Christ's body. As we explain in our booklet, *"Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us,"* the reasons for sickness and disease are manifold, and they might have nothing to do at all with any ungodly conduct of the sick person. All Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 11 is that sickness COULD be the result of partaking of the Passover in an unworthy manner, by not discerning the beaten body of Christ and the fact that we are healed "by His stripes" (Isaiah 53:5).

Even though Christians are asked to examine themselves, Paul also says that they ARE to take the Passover, if they are *baptized* members of the Church of God. When we examine ourselves and when we hear sermons telling us of our ongoing need to overcome, we must not become so discouraged that we don't want to take the Passover! Rather, examining ourselves should serve as the very preparation God wants for us. Once we do, we are to focus on Jesus Christ—He is our Passover (compare 1 Corinthians 5:7)! Just as He set us an example, the Passover is to be kept in the manner that is truly pleasing to God!

Why Not Follow the Jewish Example?

As the oracles are given to the Jews, why don't we follow their example of keeping Passover on the same day that they do, rather than keeping it one day earlier?

We need to understand properly what exactly was given to the Jews—what is meant by the word "oracles." In Romans 3:1–2, we are told that the "oracles of God" were committed to the "circumcision." At the same time, we are told that "their unbelief" did not make "the faithfulness of God" without effect (verse 3). The Greek word for "oracles" is "logion." It is also used in Acts 7:38; Hebrews 5:12; and 1 Peter 4:11. In all these passages, the oracles or "sayings" must originate from God. If something is being said or written which is contrary to

God's Word, it no longer constitutes the "oracles of God."

The *"Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,"* by W. E. Vine, points out: "Logion, a diminutive of logos, a word, narrative, statement, denotes a Divine response or utterance, an oracle; it is used of (a) the contents of the Mosaic Law, Acts 7:38; (b) all the written utterances of God through the O.T. writers, Rom. 3:2; (c) the substance of Christian doctrine, Heb. 5:12; (d) the utterance of God through Christian teachers, 1 Pet. 4:11."

Oracles of God

When referring to the oracles that God committed to the Jews or the "circumcision," the *Nelson Study Bible* states: "The oracles of God refer to the entire Old Testament, the laws and the covenants that had been given by God Himself to the nation of Israel. This phrase [in Romans 3:2] reaffirms the belief of the apostles of the inspiration of the Old Testament. The Bible is God's Word for us."

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* agrees and adds: "The oracles of God are the Old Testament in general, not just the promises alone as some commentaries suggest. The Septuagint uses this term for 'the words of God' in the law (Num. 24:4,16) or in the Psalms (107:11), and this seems to be the meaning in the New Testament... Possession of the Scriptures would be of no advantage if they were never heard, but Paul assumes they are heard every Sabbath."

As our booklet, *"God's Commanded Holy Days,"* points out on pages 2–3, "These 'oracles of God' included the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the knowledge of the week and of the Sacred Calendar. The Jews preserved the knowledge of which day the seventh day of the week is..."

Not the Same as Jewish Practice

The preservation of the Old Testament by the Jews (as well as the knowledge of the Sabbath and the Hebrew Calendar) is not the same, however, as Jewish practice.

The Jewish scribes were meticulous in writing down and making copies of the Words of Truth given to them, thus passing these Words on down so that we have them today. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that "...all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

upon the disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Some erroneously teach that on that occasion, Christ gave His disciples the Holy Spirit (compare *Nelson Study Bible* and the *Ryrie Study Bible*, comments to John 20). Others understand correctly that Christ did not give the Holy Spirit to His disciples at that time.

The *New Bible Commentary: Revised* explains: "The breathing upon them of the Spirit is understandable since the Greek '*pneuma*' means both breath and spirit. This would appear to be *in anticipation of Pentecost*, although some specific assurance of the conveyance of the gift is clearly given here."

The Holy Spirit Given on Pentecost

The Bible makes it very clear that Christ's early apostles and disciples received the Holy Spirit AFTER Christ's ascension—on the Day of Pentecost, in 31 AD, as recorded in Acts 2. We read in Acts 2:1–4 that they were in Jerusalem (Acts 1:12; 2:5), and that they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:16–18, Peter, in quoting from the writings of the prophet Joel, emphasized that the Holy Spirit was poured on them on the Day of Pentecost. He also explained in verse 33: "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Jesus Christ] poured out this what you NOW see and hear." They saw and heard a rushing wind, divided tongues as of fire, and the speaking with other clearly understood or understandable tongues or languages—not some kind of unidentifiable "gibberish."

After Christ's resurrection, but before His ascension, Christ told His apostles and disciples: "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem UNTIL you are endued *with power* from on high" (Luke 24:49). In Acts 1:4–5, 8, the risen Christ reiterated His promise: "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you *SHALL BE* baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...you **SHALL receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem..."

We read in Acts 1:9: "Now when He had spoken these things

The Resurrection of the Firstfruits

When Christ returns to the earth to establish His Kingdom, those who have died in Christ, will be resurrected first to immortality and glory to meet Him in the air. Then those who are living and faithful to their calling will also be changed into spirit and will rise to meet their King in the air! This was pictured by the *waving of the two loaves*, making no distinction as to their national or racial origin or heritage. Christ, along with those who are with Him, will then *descend* to the earth, and He will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

Yes, Christ is the *first* of the firstfruits, and those who are His at His coming are the firstfruits of God.

1 Corinthians 15:22–23 tells us: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the FIRSTFRUITS, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.” **The two resurrections noted here—Christ, in His day, and those at His coming—are represented by the wave sheaf offering and the Day of Pentecost [the Feast of Firstfruits].**

1 Corinthians 15:24, still speaking about the resurrection from the dead, continues: “Then comes the end...” The balance of mankind will have the opportunity to be brought into the Kingdom later. This is pictured in God’s Fall festivals, especially the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. All of mankind will eventually have the opportunity to enter into and to have a part in God’s Kingdom. When this aspect of God’s plan is completed, Christ will deliver “the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death...the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him [God the Father], that God may be all in all” (verses 24–26, 28).

Once God calls an individual, in the order, and at the time God has established, he will be required to be faithful to that calling in order to have the wonderful opportunity to live for eternity in that great Kingdom!

When Was the Holy Spirit Given to God’s New Testament Church?

In John 20:22, we read that Christ, after His resurrection, but before His ascension to heaven and the subsequent Day of Pentecost, breathed

Romans 3:1 conveys to us that Jews have an advantage in that God gave them His Words, along with the responsibility of the preservation of His Words, which they did so meticulously.

Having the written Word of God, however, placed another grave responsibility on their shoulders. They were to **observe** these Words and to keep them. **They were to walk in them!** God would have given Judah and all of Israel the help they needed to be faithful in these things, but they would not observe the very Words they so meticulously preserved. They considered the fact that God was there for them was all that was needed; yet He continually told them they were to **walk in His Ways**.

The kings of Israel had a personal responsibility to write out the Sacred Words, along with the command that they, too, were to walk in them, so they would learn to fear God always (Deuteronomy 17:18–20)! Israel *as a whole*, including the house of Judah, or the Jews, never learned, though *some* few did!

We read Christ’s Words to His disciples concerning the teachers of Israel and the Jewish leaders in His Day. Notice in Matthew 23:2: “... The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.” Verse 3 continues: “Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”

Obey God’s Words

Christ said that the people needed to do what the religious leaders told them to do, as long as it was taken from God’s Word—**it had to be in harmony with God’s Word!** Christ was not saying that the people had to do everything the leaders said, because He explained on other occasions that the leaders did away with God’s Word, so that they could uphold their own traditions. Later, Peter and the other apostles refused to obey the religious leadership at that time when they were told that they could not preach the gospel (Acts 5:26–29, 40–42). But even when the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the scribes spoke God’s Word, they would oftentimes not even do what they themselves taught. We are told in the Word of God, which was passed down through the Jews, what to do. Yet, if there is an inconsistency between what God’s Word says and what Jewish practice maintains, we must not do as they do.

Christianity vs. Judaism

It is important here to understand that Christianity is not the same as Judaism. The Jews today do many things that are not in conformity with Scripture. In fact, even at the time of Christ, the Jews were DIVIDED among themselves as to how to apply Scripture. While the Pharisees accepted both the written and the “oral” law—a collection of Jewish *traditions*—the Sadducees only accepted the written law, but even that, they did not understand correctly, as Christ had to point out to them on several occasions (compare James Hastings, *“Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,”* under “Sadducees”).

Many have taught the doctrine of men, instead of God’s doctrine. Matthew 15:9 records the statement of Jesus in this regard: “...And in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.” Jesus also instructed His own disciples about the problems inherent within Judaism at that time. Note this quote in Matthew 16:12: “Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Paul also warned of the possible wrong influences from Judaism in Titus 1:14: “...not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.”

The key for Christians is found in what Jesus said AND did: “... My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him” (John 7:16–18).

When to Keep the Passover

Based on this explanation, the answer to the question of why the Church of God does NOT keep the Passover at the same time as the Jews, is simply because the Jews do NOT keep the Passover **on the day as instructed in Scripture**. The Church of God follows the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus and the apostles kept the Passover on the evening when Christ was betrayed (which would be Abib or Nisan 14). As we saw already, this was one day **earlier** than the Jews keep it today. The Jews actually keep the first Day of Unleavened Bread (on Abib or Nisan 15), also called the “Night to Be Much Observed,” AS the Passover,

and age will be resurrected or changed to immortality at the time of Christ’s Second Coming. But they, too, are just the firstfruits—the first of many others who will be resurrected from the dead AFTER Christ’s return.

When God was dealing with Israel of old, He required the firstfruits of their labors—the yield of their land. This included the first yield of fruits, grain, oil, wine, the fleece from the first shorn sheep, and the first yield of honey. These were required of the people as an offering. These offerings were to be free of blemish and they were to be presented at the tabernacle to be given to the priests for their work at the altar, as prescribed by God.

But was there any other reason God required “firstfruits” at that time, other than looking for obedience in His people? Several Scriptures in the Old Testament give a hint that there was much more to what God was doing.

The Wave Sheaf Offering

In Leviticus 23:10–17, we read of the requirement of the **wave-sheaf offering**. In addition to its meaning in counting the 50 days to arrive at Pentecost, the significance attached to the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits and the waving of the two baked loaves is most important in revealing God’s intent. **The sheaf of the firstfruits represented Christ as the FIRST of the firstfruits.** The **two loaves** represented those God has called down through the ages who, if faithful to their calling, will make up the firstfruits of God, whom He will use as He establishes His Kingdom on this earth! Although some have felt that the two loaves represent those called into the truth in Old and New Testament times, it is much more likely, based on Biblical evidence we covered earlier, that these two loaves *represent ALL of those called, from the creation of man until the time of Christ’s return, both from the tribes of Israel and from non-Israelite nations—the “Gentiles.”*

Christ, being the FIRST of the firstfruits, was the first to be resurrected from the dead as an eternal Spirit being, and has returned to the Father to carry on with His duties of being our High Priest and Mediator, or Advocate, intervening before God on our behalf, as **was pictured by the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits.**

of both Israelites and Gentiles, called and chosen by God the Father to be included in the first resurrection at Christ's coming. The waving of the two loaves on the Day of Pentecost pictured this harvesting of God's firstfruits.

As God's great master plan is revealed in the remainder of His Holy Days to be observed in the Fall, we find that an even greater harvest of all of the rest of humanity will follow!

Why Are Christ and His Disciples Called Firstfruits?

In 1 Corinthians 15:20 it says that "...Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the FIRSTFRUITS of those who have fallen asleep." James 1:18, however, refers to Christ's true disciples, in this day and age, as firstfruits: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of FIRSTFRUITS of His creatures."

We reviewed several passages that true Christians, who are called to the truth and to salvation in this day and age, are referred to as "firstfruits."

For instance, recall that Revelation 14:4, which we quoted before, says: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being FIRSTFRUITS to God and to the Lamb."

Please note the following additional passages: In Romans 16:5, Ep-aenet-eus is called "the *firstfruits* of Achaia to Christ," and 1 Corinthians 16:15 refers to the household of Stephanus as the "*firstfruits* of Achaia."

Time Sequence of Calling

These Scriptures, and many others, point out a sequence or time order. They refer mainly to the time of the resurrection, but also to the time of calling. Although some were called to the truth in Old Testament times (compare Hebrews 11), most true disciples of Christ have been called for salvation since the beginning of the New Testament Church, in A.D. 31, when the Holy Spirit was given to Christ's apostles and disciples. In addition to the time sequence of calling, the risen Christ became the FIRST or the "firstfruits" of those being resurrected from the dead as an immortal Spirit being and a glorified member of the God Family. Christ's true disciples in this day

confusing the two occasions, by treating them as one and the same, and *failing* to see the distinction between the two.

In addition, the Bible commands us to keep the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days, followed by the eighth or Last Great Day. Most Jews today only keep the entire Feast of Tabernacles for four days—namely, the first two and the last two days of the entire eight-day period.

We must take and accept our direction from God's Holy Word, the Bible—not from human traditions. If there is a conflict between the two, we must follow God!

Passover or First Day of Unleavened Bread?

Exodus 12:14 states: "...this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD..." Some teach that this feast day or memorial, referred to in Exodus 12:14, describes the Passover. Is this correct?

It is not.

Although the Passover is at times referred to as a feast day (compare Leviticus 23:4–5), the Bible distinguishes between the day of Passover (on Nisan or Abib 14) and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread (on Nisan or Abib 15–21). As we will see, Exodus 12:14 refers to the Feast of the first Day of Unleavened Bread (compare Leviticus 23:4, 6), NOT the Passover.

We find that Christ and His disciples kept the Passover on Nisan or Abib 14. At that time, the Passover was sometimes included in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but, as we mentioned, the entire time was then counted as lasting *eight* days, not only seven (compare Matthew 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–18; Luke 22:1, 7–16). However, the distinction between the Passover evening and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread was still clearly understood (compare Mark 14:1–2).

When the New Testament speaks of the FEAST during the spring season, it refers to the first Day of Unleavened Bread, not the Passover evening (compare John 13:1). During the Passover evening, Christ told His betrayer, Judas, to "do quickly" what he had planned to do (John 13:27). Judas left the house, and the disciples thought that Jesus had asked him to buy those things they needed for the FEAST (compare John 13:29)—that is, the first Day of Unleavened Bread, which would start at sunset on Nisan 15—more than 20 hours later.

The First Passover Night

With this background, let us carefully review the events at the time when the first Passover was instituted. The evidence that the Passover was, and still is, to be kept at the BEGINNING of Nisan or Abib 14, not at the end, is overwhelming. Christ and His disciples, as we saw, kept the PASSOVER at the BEGINNING of the 14th, and they should have known when to keep it. Further, the death angel went through Egypt on the night of the 14th, not the 15th, and that event is called *Passover* because the death angel *passed over* the Israelites when he saw the blood at the doors of their houses (Exodus 12:27). “Passover” [and this has to include the actual event of the death angel’s PASSING OVER the Israelites] was on the 14th—not the 15th (Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16). Also, the Israelites were not to leave their houses during the Passover NIGHT until morning (Exodus 12:22), yet we read that they left Egypt **by night** (Deuteronomy 16:1). Since it could not have been the night of Nisan 14, it had to be the **next night**—Nisan 15.

The Feast and Memorial of the First Day of Unleavened Bread

According to Exodus 12:14, the day that was established as a MEMORIAL and a FEAST, to be kept FOREVER, was the 15th of Abib [or Nisan]. Exodus 13:3, 4, 6, and 9 clarify that the word “FEAST” in verse 4 refers to the FIRST Day [and the LAST Day] of Unleavened Bread. We read: “And Moses said to the people: ‘Remember THIS DAY in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. NO LEAVENED BREAD SHALL BE EATEN. ON THIS DAY you are going out, in the month Abib... Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the SEVENTH day shall be a FEAST to the LORD [that is, another holy convocation. Both on the first and on the seventh day, there are to be holy convocations, and that is why both of these days are called “FEAST” days]... It shall be a SIGN to you on your hand and as a MEMORIAL between your eyes, that the Lord’s LAW may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you OUT OF EGYPT.”

Paul reminded the Corinthians that “Christ, our PASSOVER, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). He went on to say: “Therefore let us KEEP the FEAST [of Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, nor

A Light to the Gentiles

Further proof that firstfruits from among the Gentiles seem to be represented by *one of the two loaves* may be found by examining more about Jesus Christ’s role. Shortly following His birth, this testimony about Jesus was given by Simeon: “A light to bring revelation *to the Gentiles*, And the glory of *Your people Israel*” (Luke 2:32). Jesus, knowing the unfolding plan of God, stated: “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16).

In one of the Messianic prophecies, the all-encompassing role Jesus was to fulfill for the totality of mankind is revealed: “Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a *light to the Gentiles*, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth’” (Isaiah 49:6).

Two Loaves Represent Firstfruits of Israelites and Gentiles

Paul offers this compelling overview of God’s plan of salvation—starting with the *firstfruits* and including **both those of Israel and of the Gentiles** (that is, the rest of the nations): “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:11–13).

Then, in Galatians 3:26–29, we find this summary—a kind of capstone for us to understand that God will accept not only the firstfruits of Israel, but also the firstfruits of other nations as well, which are both apparently represented in Leviticus 23 as the two loaves:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Thus, we can see that the two loaves seem to represent the firstfruits

by the Holy [Spirit].” In addition, other translations support this understanding of Paul’s testimony:

“...so that the **Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God**” (*New International Version*); “...so that gentiles might become an acceptable offering” (*New Jerusalem Bible*); “...to **offer the Gentiles to him** as an acceptable sacrifice” (*Revised English Bible*); “...so that the **Gentiles, when offered before him, may be an acceptable sacrifice**” (*Century Translations in Modern English*).

Speaking of the sacrifices associated with the Feast of Weeks, God says: “The priest shall wave them with the bread of *the firstfruits* as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest” (Leviticus 23:20).

Verse 22 of Leviticus 23 is, at first glance, seemingly out of place. However, this verse unlocks the understanding of the **Gentile role** in the promises that God made to Abraham and his descendants. Here is the verse: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.”

The story of Ruth, the Moabitess and a Gentile, is part of God’s Word. You can read the very interesting details in this short book, but the particular events surrounding Ruth’s gleanings in the field of Boaz are of particular significance (compare Ruth 1:22; 2:1–2). Ruth was the mother of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, and in the lineage of Jesus Christ! Through the provision of God’s Law, this faithful Gentile woman was accepted as a part of God’s chosen people. It is interesting to note that Jews specifically read from the Book of Ruth on the Feast of Pentecost or of Weeks (Shavuot).

Now consider another very revealing account regarding this concept of gleanings. When Jesus was asked by a woman from Canaan to heal her daughter, Jesus replied: “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). Also, He said: “...It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (verse 26). Note this remarkable statement from the woman in response: “And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table’” (verse 27). At this, Jesus said to her: “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire” (verse 28).

with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (verse 8).

More Than Once a Year?

Would it be all right, in light of 1 Corinthians 11:26, to partake of the New Testament Passover more often than just once a year?

We read in 1 Corinthians 11:26: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” Many have interpreted this Scripture to say, “Take it as often as you please.” But this is not what the Scripture teaches.

By reading in context, we learn that Paul was reminding the disciples of the events that happened on the “same night in which He (Christ) was betrayed” (verse 23). Paul stated that on that night, Christ took the bread and the wine, gave it to His disciples, and said, “Take, eat... do this in remembrance of Me... This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (verses 24, 25).

An Annual Memorial

Christ commanded His converted disciples to partake of the symbols of bread and wine “in remembrance” of “the Lord’s death.” This is clearly a memorial—as the first and last Days of Unleavened Bread are memorials—and memorials of momentous occasions are always observed **annually**—once a year—on the anniversary of the event they commemorate. It should be noted that God specifically denotes seven ANNUAL Sabbaths or Holy Days to be observed in their appointed times. These annual Holy Days are either memorials of events that have already taken place, or they foreshadow events that will still occur. It is during these annual observances that we are instructed to keep exactly what God has commanded.

Christ and His disciples were keeping the Passover—an annual celebration of the time when Old Testament Israel was spared from death. As we saw, the Israelites had to take some of the blood of the Passover lamb and put it on the two door posts and on the lintel of the houses where they ate the lamb (Exodus 12:7–8). God had promised to “pass over” the Israelites when He saw the blood (Exodus 12:13, 23). The entire service was called the “LORD’S Passover” or the “Passover sacrifice” (Exodus 12:11, 27).

Luke 22:15 tells us that Christ had “desired with fervent desire to eat this Passover.” We read in Matthew 26:17–20 that the disciples had prepared the Passover, and that Christ and His disciples ate it—the Passover lamb—“when evening had come” (Matthew 26:20; notice also Mark 14:12–18, 22). Christ changed the symbols that night from the flesh and the blood of a lamb, to the bread and the wine of the true “Passover Lamb”—Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7).

No Change of Time

By partaking of the bread and the wine on the Passover night, Christ’s disciples symbolically partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ for the continued forgiveness of their sins, as well as for their physical and spiritual healing, eventually leading to eternal life (John 6:58). So we see that it was the night of Jesus’ last Passover supper that He introduced the new symbols. Note that the Passover symbols were changed, not WHEN, or how often, Passover itself was to be observed.

The Passover was kept once a year—“as a memorial.” On the night when Christ was betrayed, He kept the Passover. The Passover was, at that time, celebrated as a supper—that is why it is called in Scripture “the Lord’s supper.” Christians are today to continue keeping the Passover, but not as a meal—not as “the Lord’s Supper.” They are only to partake of the symbols of bread and wine on the Passover night. They do not eat a full meal during the Passover service. In fact, as we have seen, Christians are told that they must “**discern the Lord’s body**”—they must distinguish the symbols of bread and wine from an ordinary meal (1 Corinthians 11:29). 1 Corinthians 11:20, 34 tells us, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is NOT to eat the Lord’s Supper... But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home.” (As an aside, nowhere does the Bible describe the Passover service as “communion,” when we are to partake of bread and/or wine).

Breaking Bread

There is no evidence in the Bible that the New Testament Church ever partook of the symbols of bread and wine more often than once a year. Some point out that the disciples “broke bread” on other occasions as well, and that this allegedly proves that they frequently partook of the New Testament Passover symbols. However, the term,

Only Firstfruits Called Today

However, the Bible reveals that God is not calling everyone, now! Rather, He is calling some to be **firstfruits**, and that *includes both those who are descendants of Israel and those who come from among Gentiles*. These are being offered an opportunity for salvation in the first resurrection, and they are called firstfruits:

James 1:18: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures”; Romans 8:23: “...we also who have the *firstfruits* of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [better: sonship], the redemption of our body”; Revelation 14:4: “These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being *firstfruits* to God and to the Lamb.”

Remember in Leviticus 23:17, in speaking of the two loaves, it says that “They are the *firstfruits* to the LORD.” Again, in verse 20, the bread is called “...the bread of the *firstfruits*.”

The second of the two loaves in Leviticus 23, then, seems to refer to **the other part of the firstfruits—converted Gentiles**.

We find in Luke’s account that Jesus specifically chose men during His lifetime on earth to be apostles (compare Luke 6:13). Following His return to the Father, Jesus Christ continued to choose individuals to assist in building and administering the Church of God. Speaking to Ananias about the man called Saul (later named Paul), Jesus said, “...for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before *Gentiles*, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Later on, Paul makes this statement in explaining his own calling: “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised [Gentiles] had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised [Israelites] was to Peter” (Galatians 2:7).

The Gentiles as an Offering

In this context, let us consider the remarkable statement found in Romans 15:16, *Authorized Version*: “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the *Gentiles* might be acceptable, being sanctified

Gentiles Included

One of the two loaves in Leviticus 23 pictured, identified or foreshadowed—as part of the firstfruits—**converted Israelites** (including those few righteous people in Old Testament times, who had been called and converted by God). Acts 2 contains the record of a partial fulfillment of the meaning of Pentecost; however, consider, also, what Peter was inspired to say by way of explanation. He quoted from the prophet Joel (compare Acts 2:17–21; Joel 2:28–32). Note, in particular, the broadly inclusive statement found in Acts 2:21: “And it shall come to pass That *whoever* calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.”

As we continue to read this account in Acts 2, Peter preaches about repentance, baptism and the promise of God’s Holy Spirit. Verse 39 again opens up the scope of the opportunity that God is presenting: “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to *all* who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Peter addressed “...all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36) on this momentous Day of Pentecost, but God would soon send him to preach the same message of salvation to another representative group of people. The circumstances of this occurrence are found in Acts 10. Through remarkable revelations, God caused Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, a *Gentile*. Here is what Peter said: “Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him’” (Acts 10:34–35). Peter continued to explain the message of salvation to those assembled, and “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word” (Acts 10:44).

Note this reaction: “And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the *Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also*” (Acts 10:45). However, those of the circumcision did not readily accept this development—that is, those of Israelite descent who were believers. We find that Peter carefully explained what had happened, and we find this statement in Acts 11:18: “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also *granted to the Gentiles* repentance to life.’”

“to break bread,” simply means, “to eat a meal.”

As David Stern points out in *“Jewish New Testament Commentary,”* 1992, on page 227: “To say that the early Messianic Jews broke bread is to say neither more [nor] less than that they ate together.”

Acts 2:46 tells us that the disciples “broke bread daily from house to house,” eating “their food with gladness.” They were eating bread daily to satisfy their hunger. Paul says, however, that if we satisfy our hunger when we partake of the symbols of bread and wine, we do it to our condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:34, *Authorized Version*). “Breaking bread,” then, was just a common term to indicate eating a meal.

Paul did NOT say in 1 Corinthians 11 that Christians should partake of the “Lord’s Supper,” and that they can do so “as often as they please.” Rather, they are partaking of the New Testament Passover symbols of bread and wine once a year—during the Passover service—in memory of and as a memorial of Christ’s death and sacrifice. Every year, when they do so, they proclaim Christ’s death until He returns.

The Feast of Firstfruits and the Two Loaves

The Feast of Pentecost, or *Feast of Weeks*, is also called the “*Feast of Firstfruits*.”

What is the meaning of the two loaves, identified as “firstfruits,” which are mentioned in Leviticus 23 in regard to the observance of Pentecost?

The specific reference in question is from Leviticus 23:17, where it says: “You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.” The vital key found in this Scripture that will lead to understanding what (or more specifically, who) is being represented by these two loaves appears in the last sentence: “They are the FIRSTFRUITS to the LORD.”

As God introduced the observance of this annual Feast Day—known to us today as the Feast of Pentecost—to the children of Israel, we note that several different names were used: “...the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field” (Exodus 23:16); “And You shall observe the *Feast of Weeks*, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest...” (Exodus 34:22); “Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your *Feast of Weeks*...” (Numbers 28:26). (Compare, also, Deuteronomy 16:9–12.)

Following His resurrection, Jesus Christ carefully instructed His disciples “...not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me’” (Acts 1:4). Continuing in Acts 2:1–4, we read that this waiting period culminated on the **Day of Pentecost—the transliterated Greek name for the Feast of Weeks, meaning fiftieth:**

(1) “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

At the time the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, and the New Testament Church was founded on the Day of Pentecost, all Church members were Israelites.

that falls within the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, but from **the SUNDAY** on which the wave sheaf was offered—and it is that **SUNDAY**, *that must fall within the seven Days of Unleavened Bread* (compare Leviticus 23:14–15; Joshua 5:11).

Orthodox Christianity determines the date of “Pentecost” by using *Easter* as a starting point for counting 50 days. Easter, however, is not the correct starting point, as it is a *pagan* festival. It is not even mentioned in the Bible, and it is not a feast to be kept by true Christians.

The Pentecost of This World

There are other obvious distinctions between the Biblical Pentecost, which *IS* to be kept by true Christians, and the Pentecost of this world, which was designed by the Roman Catholic Church and includes numerous pagan customs.

The following article from *USAREUR Public Affair*, dated May 31, 2001, is very revealing. It is titled: “Customs and Traditions: Pfingsten in Germany.” The article points out:

“‘Pfingsten,’ known in English as Pentecost or *Whitsunday*, is one of the principal moveable feasts of the Christian church. The holiday is celebrated *50 days after Easter*, thus the name Pentecost, which is derived from ‘pentekoste,’ the Greek word for ‘fifty.’ Pentecost was a popular time to baptize new members of the church. During the baptism, the members wore special white garments—thus the name ‘White Sunday’ or ‘Whitsunday.’ Depending on the Easter holiday, Pfingsten falls in late May or early June...”

The worldly celebration of “Pentecost” or “Whitsunday” is none other than a counterfeit to God’s Biblical Holy Day of Pentecost. We are to observe God’s Holy Days AND reject the worldly holidays of man that are filled with pagan customs. We are NOT to incorporate them into what we know as true worship, even though they claim to worship the true God. God has told us in His Holy Scriptures how to worship Him, and He does not accept any other form of worship! He does not accept syncretism—which, as explained before, is the combining of different forms of belief or thought, such as, mixing paganism and Christianity. Christ said that we worship Him in vain when we teach as doctrines the commandments of men, and when we follow man’s traditions in an attempt to worship God (compare Mark 7:6–9).

Chapter 2—The Days of Unleavened Bread

To reiterate, the Passover symbolizes the forgiveness of our past sins. When we repent of our sins, God is faithful to forgive us. But God’s forgiveness and mercy is not a license to continue to sin. Rather, we are to come out of sin. We are to *overcome sin now*. We are to live *worthily* of God’s calling!

The Days of Unleavened Bread, immediately following the Passover, picture this process of overcoming sin—becoming unleavened and working at staying unleavened—ceasing to sin! And even though we will slip and fall occasionally, requiring Christ’s forgiveness when we do, we are to focus on living a sinless life, rather than continuing to live *in sin*.

When ancient Israel was freed from slavery, they had to *come out of* and leave Egypt; and they did so with a high hand—with great joy and jubilation. They had just partaken of the Passover and escaped death. Symbolically, their sins were not counted against them. They did not have to die. They fled from their captivity and moved toward the Promised Land; however, Pharaoh came after them to destroy them. Figuratively, Pharaoh and his army picture Satan, the demons, and sin.

Although Israel had come away from sin, sin was still in hot pursuit. *They still had to overcome it*. But they could not do it all by themselves. They needed God’s help, which He gave in a mighty way! God led them through the Red Sea, safely to the other side. Symbolically, they went through baptism, and God’s Holy Spirit helped them to conquer sin. Pharaoh and his army would bother them no more [The role of God’s Holy Spirit will be explained in much more detail in the last section of this booklet, covering the annual Holy Day of Pentecost.]

The symbolism of this event is significant for us today. Converted Christians partake annually of the Passover ceremony to renew their relationship with God and their willingness to leave sin behind. In claiming Christ’s sacrifice in this way, they obtain forgiveness of the sins that they have still committed. They have the extra help through

God's Holy Spirit that was given to them at the time of their baptism; but even then, sin still lies at the door, waiting to bring them down and make them fail. They must come out of sin *continuously*.

Be Separate From Sin!

This can sometimes be very difficult, because Christians may not always realize that they are still living in, and with sin, since they are still living in this sinful "Babylonian" society.

That is why God tells us time and time again: "... Come out from among them And be separate..." (2 Corinthians 6:17; compare Isaiah 52:11; Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6).

Israel left Egypt literally. Lot left Sodom. Abraham left Ur in Chaldea to wander to the Promised Land. Ruth left Moab to follow her mother-in-law to Israel. Likewise, we need to leave the Babylonian society around us—the world of sin—and be separate, not literally, but symbolically. Christ said that He did not take us out of the world, but that He would see to it that we are not part of Satan's evil world (compare John 17:15). In other words, we are not to be part of sin. We are not to be partakers of the sins of others.

That is what the Days of Unleavened Bread picture—our continued efforts to *come out of sin*.

Now, Christians should not sin at all (1 John 2:1). In fact, nobody should! But we are also told that, weak and human as we are, we ALL sin from time to time. And when we do, Christ is faithful and just in that He forgives us our sin upon our repentance (1 John 1:8–9). However, sin must diminish for a converted Christian who must continue to conquer sin and leave it behind. He must change.

We can only do that, if we recognize sin and treat it for what it is, because, sin is very deceptive. Sometimes, we may not even know that we are sinning, or if we do, we may think that it is not really a big deal.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us that sin *easily ensnares us*. David prays in Psalm 19:12: "Cleanse me from secret faults." Secret to others, perhaps, but also sins which were hidden in and from David, and of which David was not aware.

Removing Physical Leaven

This process of coming out of spiritual sin is symbolized by our

Chapter 3—The Annual Holy Day of Pentecost

The Festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread show us that we can obtain forgiveness of our sins through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that we must conquer and overcome sin. But we cannot be victorious without God's help. To be successful, we need the power of God's Holy Spirit within us. The awesome truth that God is willing to grant us the gift of His Holy Spirit, is revealed in the annual Festival of Pentecost.

The Feast of Pentecost is observed once a year. Pentecost means "count fifty." The Feast of Pentecost is always celebrated on a Sunday, exactly fifty days from the Sunday that falls within the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

How to Count Pentecost

It sometimes occurs that most Sabbath-keeping Church of God organizations and Orthodox Christianity keep Pentecost on the same day. Does this mean that all are obedient in keeping the annual Holy Day of Pentecost, as instructed by God in the Bible?

No. It does not mean this at all.

The Church of God and the Orthodox Catholic and Protestant world may indeed at times observe Pentecost on the same Sunday. But this is merely coincidental. There are many years when the Church of God and the Orthodox Christian world celebrate Pentecost on different days. Why? Because the Church of God determines the correct date for Pentecost by counting 50 days from the Sunday [after the weekly Sabbath], which falls **within** the annual Holy Days of Unleavened Bread, as instructed in the Bible (Leviticus 23:11).

The wave sheaf was offered on the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The wave sheaf pictures Jesus Christ, who ascended to heaven on a Sunday, even though He was resurrected on Saturday evening, just around sunset. Exactly 50 days later, He poured out the Holy Spirit from God the Father on His New Testament Church. This was the Day of Pentecost.

In other words, we are **not** to count 50 days from the *weekly Sabbath*

frustrated and discouraged and fall into utter despair when we find that we have sinned again. Rather, we are to throw ourselves on the mercy of God, asking Him to give us the power to overcome and conquer our sins. We must do our part, of course, and we must never give up.

Sin CAN Be Overcome!

We are promised in Philippians 1:3–6 that God would not have called us for salvation, unless He knew that we COULD overcome sin. Everyone sins, including converted Christians, but with God’s help, we CAN overcome sin. The only enemy who can stop us from overcoming sin, is our own self. Only when we refuse to repent of our sins and refuse to seek God’s help, will we not get the help that we need from God.

One of those early disciples who forsook the Way—at least temporarily—was Demas. He is mentioned in Colossians 4:14. He was with Paul and with Luke, greeting the church in Colosse. But later, in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul tells us that Demas forsook him, “having loved this present world.” Demas will be remembered as one who went back to the world out of which he had come. That is why we are warned, “Don’t love the world and what is in it.”

However, Hebrews 10:39 encourages us: “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” Many of those whom we discussed herein, sinned—sometimes very severely—but they repented of their sins, and they pressed forward toward their goal of eternal life. We must do likewise, and we can, even in times of difficulties and trials (Romans 13:11–12; Romans 8:31–39). We CAN come out of sin and overcome sin! How? The next Holy Day—Pentecost—provides us with the answer.

physical removal of leaven from our houses, as well as in refraining from eating leavened food during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. When you try to remove leaven from your house, you learn how difficult it may be to find and get rid of ALL leaven. Some leaven is obvious, but you may find leaven in places you would have never thought to look. The same is true with sin. We may sin in ways we don’t realize—until we discover “hidden sins” upon our careful self-examination.

When used in connection with the Days of *Unleavened* bread, leaven symbolizes sin. Christ spoke of the “leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6, 11), which He described as their wrong and sinful “doctrine” (verse 12). He also equated the “leaven of the Pharisees” with the sin of “hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). As sin may begin small and spreads, so does leaven. Paul warns us twice that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9). During the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, we are reminded that we are to overcome sin and leave it behind, pictured by removing and not eating leavened food. We are then to replace sin with righteousness, pictured by the consumption of unleavened products.

The ancient Israelites were commanded to eat unleavened bread and to remove all leaven from their houses during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 13:6–7; Deuteronomy 16:3–4). As spiritual Israel today, the Church of God follows this practice in the same way the early New Testament Church did. Paul told the Corinthians to keep the *Feast* of Unleavened Bread with the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). He admonished them that, even though they were physically “unleavened” (verse 7)—keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread and removing all leavened products from their houses—they also had to behave with a *spiritually unleavened mind*, by removing not just physical leaven, but also the spiritual leaven of *sin* from their lives.

What Constitutes Leaven?

Why does the Church’s understanding differ from the understanding of the Jews as to what constitutes leaven that must not be eaten and that which needs to be removed during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread?

We need to evaluate cautiously and carefully the Jewish definition of what constitutes “leaven” that needs to be removed from our

houses during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. As discussed before, when comparing God's Word with Jewish *practice*, the Jewish definition does not have to be accepted by God's Church, if it is, in effect, adding to, or deleting from the revealed purpose and spirit of God's commandment. Christ came to *exalt* God's Law and make it *more honorable* (Isaiah 42:21), and to teach His followers the spiritual applications of the Law (compare Matthew 5:21–48)—going beyond the application of the letter of the law (Romans 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6).

In certain respects, the spiritual concept of leaven is *both broader and narrower* than the Jewish understanding.

To quote from the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, on Exodus 13, p. 360, notice the somewhat stringent and extreme interpretation of "leaven" in "later Judaism":

"These must be removed at Passover: Babylonian porridge, Median beer, Edomite vinegar, and Egyptian Barley-beer, also dyers' pulp, cooks' starch-flour, and writers' paste. R. Eliezer says: Also women's cosmetics. This is the general rule: whatsoever is made from any kind of grain must be removed at passover' (Perashim 3:1)..."

What About Beverages?

There is nothing, however, in the entirety of Scripture [as distinguished from human traditions!] to indicate any restriction on the kind of beverages we consume during the Days of Unleavened Bread—no mention of these being the "Days of Unleavened Beverages." *Beverages or items not meant or fit for human consumption* need **not** be removed! The fact is that in all cases where the Days of Unleavened Bread are mentioned, the reference is always to the example set by the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt without any leaven in their dough (see Exodus 12:39). There is no reference to the invisible yeast or result of it in either beer, wine or other beverages. If God had intended a ban on fermented beverages during the Days of Unleavened Bread, it would undoubtedly have been mentioned. In fact, such mention *would have been necessary*.

A response from the Letter Answering Department of the *Worldwide Church of God* many years ago adds the following:

"Items such as bread, cake, crackers, cookies, and prepared cereals

This is a grave lesson for us. We must conquer sin before it begins to grow and bring on calamities and, in the end, eternal death. We must repent of sin and continuously work to get rid of it.

Job's Self-Righteousness

We might also consider Job in this context. He was a righteous man, but he was so righteous that he thought he could not sin. In fact, he thought that he was more righteous than God (Job 32:1–2, *Revised English Bible*). Self-righteousness and the feeling that we know better than God—or that God deals unrighteously with us—is a serious sin that must be overcome. Job *did* finally repent, and he confessed his lack of understanding, as the 42nd chapter reveals.

The Sin of Syncretism

In Jeremiah 10, we are introduced to another deceptive sin, that of syncretism—combining different forms of belief or thought, such as, mixing paganism and Christianity. We are told not to participate in, nor even learn, the religious practices of the Gentiles. **We cannot adopt pagan elements for inclusion in our worship of God!** To participate in Easter or Christmas is wrong. This would include giving Easter eggs or Christmas presents to our children or grandchildren; participating in Christmas or Easter worship services; decorating a Christmas tree; hiding Easter eggs for the children or grandchildren; or reading Christmas stories to them. Regardless of whether we ourselves believe in these customs or not, we are not to *participate* in them, under any circumstances. (For more information, please read our free booklet, "*Don't Keep Christmas!*").

We Are Responsible for Christ's Death

All sins which mankind has committed through the ages, caused Christ's death. It does not matter whether the sin is greed, hate, envy, wrong zeal, lies or fear. Each and every sin caused Christ to die.

Revelation 21:8; 22:15 tells us that every sin not repented of, will bring upon us the second and final death, from which there is no resurrection. The list of sins is seemingly endless. Galatians 5:19–21 and Ephesians 5:3–7 contain many sins that must be overcome.

BUT—with God, ALL things are possible. We don't have to be

she was married to Uriah. David then took her and slept with her, and Bathsheba became pregnant. So, the adultery, which had started in David's mind, led to the real act, and resulted in grievous consequences.

One sin leads to the next. When David heard that Bathsheba was pregnant, he called Uriah back from the battlefield and encouraged him to sleep with his wife. David reasoned that he could later say that the child was Uriah's. But Uriah would not sleep with his wife. David tried again by making him drunk, thinking that when he was drunk, he would sleep with his wife. But Uriah still would not do so.

David Murders Uriah

David's scheme had failed. Now he resorted to murder. He ordered Uriah to go back to the battlefield and wrote the Commander-in-Chief, Joab: "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die" (2 Samuel 11:15). And that is what happened (verses 16–25). So then, David took Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, to become his wife, and she bore him a son (verses 26–27).

All of this was going on for at least nine months, perhaps even longer. During all this time, David seemed to have justified his transgressions somehow, without repenting. God sent the prophet Nathan to him (2 Samuel 12), who told him the famous story about the little lamb of the poor man that the rich man took away from him.

David was so enraged with the rich man that he ordered his execution. It is sometimes very easy to see the sins of others, but it is very difficult to see the much greater sins in which we ourselves may be engaged. That is why Christ tells us to remove first the plank in our eyes, before we try to remove the speck in the eyes of our neighbor (compare Matthew 7:3–5). Nathan showed David that *he* was the rich man, as he had stolen Uriah's wife (the little lamb) from Uriah (the poor man in comparison with David) and as he had murdered Uriah, one of his most faithful servants. He had thereby committed grievous sins.

David finally came to his senses when Nathan told him this story, but the penalty he had to pay was great. The son that Bathsheba had borne David, died; David himself was doomed to have wars from then on for the rest of his life; his wives and concubines would be publicly molested and abused; and he would have internal problems within his own family, including his sons rising up against him, such as Absalom.

and pies which contain leavening, of course, must be put out. Doing so is symbolic of putting both the visible and the hidden sins out of our lives. It is true, however, that leavening agents are also found in a number of products other than baked goods. Among these are beer, wine, and antacids, and some medications, bath powders, toothpastes, and dog foods. Even fire extinguishers contain forms of leavening agents. But, all these need not be discarded."

What About Baking Soda and Baking Powder?

On the other hand, certain "leavening agents," which the Jews don't remove, SHOULD BE removed. These leavening agents *include baking soda and baking powder*, but not "brewer's yeast," "yeast extracts," or "cream of tartar."

In regard to baking soda and baking powder, it has been said that these agents are dead, unable to puff up the dough. Whether or not this is true from a biological-chemical standpoint, note how these agents are defined in encyclopedias. For instance, the *Grosse Brockhaus* defines "baking powder" as "baking leavening, to loose the dough, used in *replacement* of yeast." The *WebBible Encyclopedia* defines "leaven" as an "agent used to raise bread or other flour foods. Physical leavens include water vapor, which is released as steam at high temperatures (as in popovers), and air, which is incorporated by beating. CHEMICAL LEAVEN (BAKING POWDER AND BAKING SODA) and biological leavens (yeasts and certain bacteria) raise the mixture by the formation of carbon dioxide gas, which is expanded by heat." The *Encyclopedia Britannica* adds that baking powder is "a prepared mixture to *replace* yeast in baking."

Based on the foregoing, baking powder and baking soda *are to be treated as* leavening agents that are to be removed during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Whether active agents or not, they would clearly be used, in any event, as a substitute for leavening to puff up any flour or meal product, thereby violating the **spirit** of God's commands.

Personal Conscience

It is a matter of personal conscience between the individual Christian and God as to whether a particular product, which might not clearly constitute leaven, should be thrown out. If having any particular

products in one's home during the Days of Unleavened Bread defiles a person's conscience, it would be best to get rid of them during the festival (Romans 14:23).

We must also be careful not to offend others and *their* conscience. If we know that a member would be offended if we were to bring products into his house, or to Church services, which the member considers "leavened," we should refrain from doing so (compare the principle in 1 Corinthians 10:23–33).

Coming Out Of Sin

As mentioned, Christians must come out of sin, which is pictured by their removal of leaven—a symbol for sin—during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. Seven stands for completeness—showing that Christians must concentrate on eradicating sin completely. This is not easy, as the Bible clearly shows.

Sin is very deceptive. Many times, we may not recognize sin, as the environment in which we are living views sinful conduct as normal and acceptable.

Righteous Abram Not Without Sin

Abram, whom God later called Abraham, failed at times to recognize the deceitfulness of sin. Although Abram would become the father of the faithful, he was not perfect in faith at the time he was called. He—like every one of us—had to come out of sin, repeatedly. We read that Abram lied on several occasions—he said that Sarah was his sister, because he feared that people would kill him if he would say that she was his wife. In Abram's eyes, his lie had a legitimate excuse. But not in God's eyes. Abram had to learn that no lie is justified. Sadly, Isaac would later repeat his father's sin by lying about his wife Rebecca.

Abraham also thought adultery was a legitimate way of bringing God's promise to pass. God had promised Abraham and Sarah a son, but since Sarah was unable to conceive, she asked Abraham to produce offspring through her own maid, Hagar. This was sinful conduct that only led to bad results. The bad consequences have lasted over the centuries, and can still be seen today in the continued fighting between the Jews and the Arabs—the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn son.

Abraham did what everybody around him did. Everybody lied, and the practice of producing offspring in the way that Abraham and Sarah did was not uncommon at the time. Abraham was a child of his time, and he had *to come out* of the customs of his society. But the good news is that he did. God called him His friend. He learned how to obey God's commandments.

King Saul's Disobedience

Unfortunately, King Saul did not learn how to overcome sin. He became Israel's first king. He was a tall man, very good-looking, but he did not have the moral backbone to uphold the commandments of God. Instead, he gave in to the pressure of the people. When Samuel did not come to offer a sacrifice to God in the face of the threat of the Philistines, Saul fell in despair, because the people were scattering. He went ahead and offered the sacrifice himself. Humanly speaking, it was understandable, but not in God's eyes (1 Samuel 13:8–14).

Saul again disobeyed by not killing Agag, the king of the Amorites, and the cattle of the Amorites, although God had specifically ordered him to do so. He decided to spare the cattle and sacrifice them to the Lord. It seemed like a good idea from a human standpoint, but, again, God did not agree (1 Samuel 15:21–23). It seems that Saul had not understood that he had sinned by disobeying God. Notice how he welcomed Samuel, in verses 13 and 20. He had become proud—he thought he could determine for himself what was right and wrong.

David's Adultery

King David sinned greatly, not at first realizing the deceitfulness of sin. But he learned his lessons and will be resurrected as an immortal Spirit being at the time of Christ's return (compare Jeremiah 30:9).

We learn in 2 Samuel 11 about the ongoing sinful conduct of David regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. But it all started rather mildly—at least perhaps in David's mind. David walked on the roof of his house and saw Bathsheba bathing. He obviously looked at her with thoughts of desire. As a married man, that was already wrong. Christ later told us, If you look at another woman with lust in your heart, you have already committed adultery in your heart (compare Matthew 5:27–28). In addition, David inquired as to who Bathsheba was, and found out that