

Prologue

The controversy over a 14th or 15th Passover is an ancient conflict spanning over 3,000 years. This conflict can be traced to Israel's early years in the Promised Land, when the idolatrous worship of Baal began to take hold. Baal, the false "Lord" of the heathen, was the chief rival of the true Lord God of Israel. The worshipers of Baal continually enticed and seduced the people of Israel to replace the worship of the true God with the counterfeit practices of Baalism.

After the twelve tribes of Israel split into the northern kingdom, called the Kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom, called the Kingdom of Judah, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom rejected the worship of the Lord God and embraced Baalism as their official religion. So universal was this descent into Baalism that in the 900's B.C., about seventy years after the division of the kingdom, Ahab, who ruled the northern kingdom of Israel, took Jezebel as his wife. Jezebel, who was the high priestess of Asherah and Baal, used her royal authority to promote her pagan religion and suppress the worship of the true Lord of Israel.

Under the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel, Israel abandoned her covenant with the Lord God and covenanted with the false imposter Baal. Forsaking the Nisan 14 Passover and the Nisan 15-21 Feast of Unleavened Bread, which the true Lord had commanded, Israel embraced Baal's counterfeit Nisan 15 transubstantiation meal and a Nisan 15-21 leavened bread observance.

Israel's infidelity so angered the Lord God that He shut up the heavens. He sent Elijah the prophet, who prayed that the latter rains of the spring might fail. The rains failed for three successive years. For three Passover/Unleavened Bread seasons, the skies were like iron and the fields were like brass. For three long years, the children of Israel and their pagan priests cried out to Baal, the rain-god, "El is Baal, El is Baal, El is Baal." Still the rains did not come. The priests and prophets of Baal leapt and shouted, slashing themselves until their blood gushed onto "Mother Earth." The offering of their blood was meant to provoke Baal, "Father Sky," to anger. They believed that Baal would then strike out at the drought and angrily thunder across the sky in tumultuous, raining fury. But the rains never came.

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At the end of three and one-half years, in the fall, perhaps at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, Elijah called the children of Israel and the priests and prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel. He challenged them to return to the worship of the true Lord God. Elijah's challenge rang out across the slopes of Mount Carmel: "How long halt [leap] ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow Him: but if Baal [be God], *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (I Kings 18:21, *KJV*).

Elijah called upon the children of Israel to repent and return to God's true covenant with all their hearts. This repentance meant returning to the true worship of God, including the Nisan 14 Passover, the weekly Sabbath and the annual holy days of God. Israel was called to repent of honoring Baal on Nisan 15 with an animal sacrifice and a meal of transubstantiation. This "passover of Baal" was one of the most sacred days of Baal worship, for it was believed that on the full moon of Nisan 15 the leavened bread and wine offered to Baal actually became the body and blood of Baal. This counterfeit "passover" service was followed by a feast of seven days of leavened bread. It was accompanied by orgiastic, sexual worship of Baal. Elijah was calling Israel to repent and turn from these idolatrous practices.

It was agreed in this confrontation between Elijah and the priests and prophets of Baal that the God who answered by fire would prove Himself to be the true Lord God of Israel. As the priests and prophets of Baal began their ritual dancing and bloodletting, Elijah provoked them with repeated challenges. Elijah's mocking continued through the day while the priests of Baal called fruitlessly upon their god. The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the groves leapt, shouted and gashed themselves with knives until "Mother Earth" ran thick with their blood. But Baal, "Father Sky," remained silent and windless. The prophets' blood spilling on the barren ground brought no response from Baal.

After the priests of Baal finished their futile, bloody rituals (perhaps on the last high day of the Feast of Tabernacles), Elijah acted. "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

"And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the

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second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

"And it came to pass *at the time* of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and *that I am* your servant, and *that I* have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that *thou art* the LORD God, and *that thou* hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench. And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD [Jehovah], he *is* the God [Elohim]; the LORD, he *is* the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there" (I Kings 18:30-40, *KJV*).

Convinced by this awesome display of power, Israel was ready to turn from Baal worship and to renew her covenant relationship with the true Lord God by worshiping Him on His weekly Sabbath and by observing the 14th Passover, the seven days of unleavened bread and all the holy days of God. But Israel's repentance was short-lived, and the people soon returned to whoring after Baal. When Israel again broke her covenant with God, she was rooted out of the land in accordance with the mutually agreed terms of that covenant. Between 721 and 718 BC, nearly all the Israelites from the ten northern tribes were carried into Assyrian captivity, disappearing into the hot, dusty wastes of what are now the nations of Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkestan and Afghanistan. The southern kingdom of Judah also refused to repent of her whoring after Baal and, beginning with a series of Chaldean-Babylonian invasions in 609 BC, was carried into captivity.

Baalism was the stumbling block that turned both Israel and Judah from their covenant with God, ultimately bringing their captivity. Central to their worship of Baal was a Nisan 15 transubstantiation meal. To this day, Judah insists on observing the Passover on Nisan 15, clinging to the day that she was accustomed to observe in commemoration of Baal. She refuses to acknowledge Christ Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God, slain on Nisan 14.

Christianity itself has not been immune to the insidious influences of Baalism. Deliberate attempts to pervert the true worship of God through the counterfeit teachings of Baalism are recorded in the writings of the New Testament. The force behind these attempts was the centuries-old assertion that Nisan 14 was not the true Passover day of God. The epistles of Paul are rife with this doctrinal combat (Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews), and the Gospel of John

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attests to this spiritual and doctrinal combat in which all true Christians were fully engaged by AD 70. By AD 95, the leadership of the Roman church (*ekklesia*) was abandoning the seventh-day Sabbath for Sunday, the first day of the week, and abandoning the 14th Passover for Easter Sunday worship.

This was the battlefield of doctrine on which the early New Testament church, the new Israel, engaged Baal and his priests (Jude 11, Revelation 2:14). These priests of Baal, called *kohens* or *khns* in the ancient language of the Caananite, launched a three-pronged assault against the true Christians of the first-century church. One prong of the assault was launched from Jerusalem; a second assault was launched from Alexandria, Egypt; and the third assault was launched from Rome.

These three movements soon coalesced into a weekly communion service-- a meal of transubstantiation to Mithras, the Baal of Persia, and the annual sunrise service in honor of Mithras' supposed resurrection. This service, now renamed Christian, was adopted by growing numbers of churches throughout the empire until it eventually replaced the true Passover service of Nisan 14. This push to paganize the worship of God was championed by Orthodox and Gnostic Gentile leaders of Asia Minor and Rome.

By AD 135, nearly every church congregation (*ekklesia*) in the Mediterranean region had abandoned the true Passover for Sunday Communion and the yearly Easter sunrise services. By AD 195, a mere sixty years later, the Orthodox Gentile bishops of Palestine had fully succumbed to this onslaught. Let us not forget that the first step in this dastardly departure from the true worship of God was the seemingly innocuous introduction of Baal's communion meal of Nisan 15 by the Middle Eastern conspiracy and of Baal's weekly Sunday worship by the leadership of Rome.

By AD 200, the only remaining bastion of truth to be found west of the Great Syrian Desert was in the province of Asia. As the book of Revelation and early church histories record, the true Christians of Asia, led by the Ephesus church (*ekklesia*), manned the ramparts of righteousness as received from the Lord Jesus Christ and the true apostles, and repelled assault after assault against the weekly seventh-day Sabbath and against the 14th Passover.

Eusebius records the testimony of Polycrates, the leader of the Ephesian resistance, who held fast against this invasion of false doctrine: "...but the bishops in Asia were led by Polycrates in persisting that it was necessary to keep the custom which had been handed down to them of old. Polycrates himself in a document which he addressed to Victor and to the church of Rome, expounds the

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tradition which had come to him as follows: 'Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia great luminaries sleep, and they will rise on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven and seek out [literally to raise up] all the saints. Such were Phillip of the twelve apostles, and two of his daughters who grew old as virgins, who sleep in Hierapolis, and another daughter of his, who lived in the Holy Spirit, rests at Ephesus. Moreover, there is also John, who lay on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the breastplate, and the martyr, and teacher. He sleeps at Ephesus. And there is also Polycarp at Smyrna, both bishop and martyr, who sleeps at Laodicea, and Papius, too, the blessed, and Melito the eunuch, who lived entirely in the Holy Spirit, who lies in Sardis, waiting for the visitation from heaven when he will rise from the dead. All these kept the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, never swerving, but following according to the rule of the faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen, and some of them have I followed. For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen ever kept the day when the people put away the leaven. Therefore, brethren, I who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord and conversed with the brethren from every country, and have studied all the holy Scriptures, am not afraid of threats, for they have said who were greater than I, "It is better to obey God rather than men" ' ' (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I, pp. 505-507).

After the death of Polycrates and his fellow Christian warriors in Asia Minor, the only remaining resistance to the relentless pagan conspiracy was in the distant Mesopotamian Valley and in the mountainous regions of Europe. Our true Christian brethren in these regions faithfully preserved the Old and New Testaments from the ravages of the Roman Orthodox, Jewish Orthodox and Gnostic communities. Opposing all corrupting influences, they preserved the only true testimony of our Messiah and His Passover.

As Elijah confronted the prophets and priests of Baal, and as our New Testament brethren resisted false prophets in their days, we also are engaged in a conflict. At stake is our eternity. Our combat is not against flesh and blood, but against the diabolical strongholds of reasonings--seductive reasonings that draw us away from the true worship of God and into the counterfeit worship of Baal.

We who are true Christians are the "New Israel." As Baalism was a stumbling block to the Israelites of old, tempting them to forsake their covenant with God, so our covenant relationship with our Lord is being severely tested. Will we falter in that relationship and succumb to the false teachings that our earlier brethren so faithfully resisted? Will we retreat from conflict and betray this ancient cloud of witnesses, whose blood figuratively cries out from the altar of

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God? Or will we overwhelm the strongholds of evil by continuing to follow our Lord and remaining faithful to the 14th Passover?

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, instituted the new symbols of the Christian Passover on the night of the 14th of Nisan. If we have truly accepted Christ as our Passover sacrifice, we must defend the 14th Passover that He established as the Lord God of the Old Covenant and fulfilled as the Mediator of the New Covenant. If we desire that God the Father continue to "pass over" our transgressions in grace and forgiveness, we must remain under the blood of the only Passover sacrifice that can cover our sins--Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

To worship God on a Nisan 15 Passover is to betray Christ and remove ourselves from His protective blood of the New Covenant. The choice is ours! If Christ be Lord, let us follow Him. For the worshipers of Baal are once again on the assault!

In *The Christian Passover*, Fred R. Coulter gives us a sharp doctrinal sword with which to engage and defeat the enemies of Christ. He offers us the strong shield of God's Word to protect ourselves from the darts of Satan as we battle the strongholds of perverse doctrine. This carefully researched book confronts the 14th-15th Passover controversy with faith, courage, force, and scholarly honesty to expose the errors of heresy and to reveal the light of the Word of God. Every argument, every doctrinal question and every difficult Scripture has been thoroughly examined, and the truth of the Word of God has been made clear and easy to understand.

The task of defending the truth of God's Word has fallen to us in this end time. Let us therefore be diligent to study every Scripture in this vitally important book. Let us gird up our loins, take up this doctrinal sword and shield, and fight the good fight of faith!

Carl D. Franklin

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The Christian Passover

Preface--First Edition

The title of this book may give the impression that the contents are devoted to a very narrow and technical Biblical subject. It is true that this book was written to thoroughly document and confirm the exact date and time of day for the proper observance of the true Christian Passover. However, the full meaning and ramifications of the true New Testament Passover extend far beyond the day and time of its observance. The Christian Passover is the heart and core of Biblical Christianity. It is the bedrock foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Observing the true Christian Passover, as commanded by Jesus Christ, is fundamental to salvation and eternal life.

While all religions--Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and others--profess various methods and avenues to eternal life, the Bible teaches that there is only ONE WAY! That way is through Jesus Christ--His life, death and resurrection. On the night of His last Passover, before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus proclaimed, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, except through Me" (John 14:6, *Author's Translation*).

THERE IS NO OTHER WAY!

Jesus made it absolutely clear that eternal life comes only through His flesh and His blood: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6: 53-54, *Author's Translation*).

These words of Jesus Christ have led to the age-long conflict between professing Christianity and the religion of Judaism. With the exception of a number of Jewish Messianic believers, Judaism as a whole has rejected Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of mankind. Hence, Judaism does not recognize the writings and teachings of the New Testament, including the 14th Christian Passover. Judaism claims that according to their traditions, the Passover is on the 15th day of the first month of the Hebrew/Jewish calendar, and always has been, in spite of the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures clearly teach that it was originally observed on the 14th day of the first month.

While blinded to their own error, the leaders of Judaism readily acknowledge that the traditions and customs of worldly Christianity--Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants--did not originate in the teachings of the Scriptures. Nowhere do

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the Scriptures of the Old Testament--or the New Testament--teach Sunday-keeping, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or other holidays which are supposedly "Christian." Neither do the Scriptures teach that God accepts the worship of idols and icons, or the use of rosaries. In fact, the Scriptures strongly condemn such abominable idolatries! All these pagan religious practices are condemned by God in the Scriptures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is a historical fact that these pagan religious practices are not of Biblical origin but were adopted into worldly Christianity from Gnostic Gentile religions.

On the other hand, worldly Christianity, as paganized as it is, can clearly understand the error of Judaism in rejecting Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Most professing Christians can also perceive the error in Judaism's justification and salvation by works of law, and that such works are a means of compelling God to grant eternal life to the believer.

Opposition between worldly Christianity and Judaism has raged since the last part of the first century. However, perceiving the errors in the religious practices of another does not automatically bring one to an understanding of the true teachings of the Scriptures, whether Old Testament or New Testament.

In spite of opposition from the leaders of both worldly Christianity and Judaism, down through the centuries there have always been true Christians who have observed the seventh-day Sabbath and the 14th Christian Passover as taught by Jesus Christ. These true believers have the faith and testimony of Jesus Christ. They have rejected the paganized idolatry, dogmas, traditions, teachings and practices of worldly Christianity. Likewise, they have rejected the anti-Scriptural, traditional practices of Judaism, which oppose the teachings of Jesus Christ.

This body of true Christians has been preserved and nurtured by God through repeated persecutions and martyrdoms at the hands of the worldly religious forces of Catholicism and Judaism. These true believers have survived through all generations since Jesus Christ founded His own Church, and are again emerging as a religious body in sufficient numbers to cause notice. But in these end times, the opposing forces of worldly Christianity and Judaism have renewed their assault against the true faith in their attempts to paganize or Judaize the true Church of God away from the true teachings of the Scriptures. The true Church of God, now numbering hundreds of organizations and thousands of congregations around the world, is engaged in a doctrinal battle for the truth of the Scriptures and the true worship of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

It is not difficult to expose the pagan doctrines of worldly Christianity. The truth of God in both Old Testament and New Testament clearly reveals the non-

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Biblical and non-Christian aspects of those teachings. However, the anti-Scriptural teachings of Judaism are more difficult to expose. These traditional teachings are Judaism's chief weapon in an insidious effort to Judaize all forms of Christianity--whether worldly or Biblical.

While this dual conflict is new for true Christians in this age, it is the same conflict which confronted the original apostles and followers of Jesus Christ in the first century when the true Church of God was being raised up. The beginnings of the Judaic/Christian conflict are recorded for us in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Evidence of this conflict can be found in all the books of the New Testament.

The conflict between true Christianity and the forces of paganism can also be found in the pages of the New Testament. The undermining influence of Gnostic and Orthodox Christianity was responsible for many warnings and much condemnation in I and II Corinthians; Colossians; II Peter; I, II, III John and Jude.

In the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, we find a prophecy of both conflicts as they would impact the true Church of God down through history until the return of Jesus Christ. There are some in the churches of God who have succumbed to these pressures. But in spite of all opposition, there are many faithful Christians who have continued to believe and practice the truth.

God has faithfully preserved His Word of truth so that the true way of salvation through Jesus Christ is available for all to know. In the final analysis, it is not the religious traditions of men--neither worldly Christianity nor Judaism--which should form the basis of our beliefs. The faith of a true Christian should be founded solely upon the inspired Word of God.

The purpose of this book is to help the reader to understand the truth of God as preserved in the Scriptures of both Old Testament and New Testament concerning the Christian Passover. It is vital for every true believer to understand this truth. Observing the true Passover as Jesus commanded and partaking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ is essential to enter the New Covenant, and to reaffirm and maintain that covenant relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

On the night of His last Passover, Jesus instituted the New Covenant, beginning with the footwashing, and then administering to His disciples the new symbols of the unleavened bread and the wine. In commanding them to practice the New Covenant Passover, He taught them an integral part of its meaning: "In that day [the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead], you shall know

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that I *am* in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him....If anyone loves Me, he will be keeping My word, and My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

"The one who does not love Me is not keeping My words; and the word that you are hearing is not Mine, but the Father's Who has sent Me" (John 14:20-24, *Author's Translation*).

These words of Jesus Christ clearly express another Biblical truth: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life **through Jesus Christ our Lord**" (Rom. 6:23).

May God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son grant you the love and conviction of the Truth of God, so that through the love and grace of God and the proper observance of the true Christian Passover, as Jesus commanded, you may obtain the gift of eternal life which is granted only through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior--THE TRUE PASSOVER LAMB OF GOD!

Fred R. Coulter
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Preface--Second Edition

When the first edition of *The Christian Passover* was released, one prominent evangelist asked, "Why does something as simple as the Passover need a book of 320 pages to explain it?" Yes, why are the controversies over the Christian Passover so complicated that now an even larger book of 512 pages is required to thoroughly explain it? The answer is that the clear and simple instructions of Jesus Christ have been buried under a mountain of false doctrines, misinterpretations, and Christianized pagan practices that have become time-honored traditions. These myriad false teachings and practices have nearly destroyed the true knowledge of the Christian Passover, which reveals the supreme love of God the Father in giving His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16, *Author's Translation*).

The truth is that the Christian Passover encompasses the entire message of God as revealed in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. It reveals the greatness of God in fulfilling the promise of a Savior Who would redeem mankind from sin. This promise, which was given after man's first sin, was fulfilled when the Creator God gave up His glory and honor and came to earth in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16). The apostle Paul reveals how God humbled Himself to become a man: "Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus; Who, *when He* existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself *and* took the form of a servant, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men; and being found in manner as a man, He humbled Himself, being obedient unto death, even the death of *the* cross" (Phil. 2:5-8, *Author's Translation*). In His great love, the Creator of mankind became "the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, *Author's Translation*).

Long before the birth of Jesus Christ, Satan the devil had prepared his grand deception, which offered an appealing array of counterfeit doctrines and practices to turn mankind from the true way of salvation. When Jesus began His ministry, He condemned the leaders of Judaism for rejecting the commandments of God and adopting worthless substitutes, which became the official traditions of the Jews: "How well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it has been written, 'This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me.' But in vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrine *the* commandments of men. For,

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having left the commandments of God, you hold fast the traditions of men....Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your tradition" (Mark 7:6-9, *Author's Translation*).

The Scriptural and historical evidence that is presented in this book clearly points to the traditional practices of Judaism as the cause of the confusion over which day is the true Passover day--the 14th or the 15th. By setting aside the misinterpretations and traditions of Judaism and systematically examining the Scriptures of the Old Testament, it is possible to determine the exact time that God ordained for the observance of the Passover. The true Passover day is not the day that is recognized by the leaders of Judaism.

In New Testament times, many Christians succumbed to the false teachings and practices of Judaism. Over the centuries, many more Christians fell prey to counterfeit practices which began in ancient Babylon. These perverse practices were brought into Christianity through the influence of the Roman church.

Today we are confronted with a fully developed apostate Christianity, which a deceived world has accepted as authentic. The apostle Paul called this satanic deception, which began to unfold in his day, "the mystery of iniquity *that* is already working" (II Thess. 2:7, *Author's Translation*). In an epistle to the Corinthians, he warned of false apostles who claimed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ but were actually the ministers of Satan the devil: "But I *greatly* fear, lest by any means, even as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds should be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For if indeed one comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept, you show great tolerance toward *him*....For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15, *Author's Translation*).

The apostle Peter also warned that false apostles would secretly come into the churches of God and corrupt the true teachings of Jesus Christ: "But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, **who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies, personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed"** (II Pet. 2:1-2, *Author's Translation*).

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As the apostasy was gaining ground, the apostle Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote an urgent appeal to the early Christians, exhorting them to hold fast to the faith of Jesus Christ, which had been delivered to them by His true apostles. Notice: "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting you to *fervently* fight for the faith which once *for all time* has been delivered to the saints. For certain men have stealthily crept in; these are the ones who a long time ago have been written about, *condemning them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are distorting the grace of our God into licentiousness, and are denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4, *Author's Translation*).

Jude's fervent appeal did not turn back the rising tide of apostasy. The satanically inspired movement was so powerful that the true apostles of Jesus Christ were being rejected by some in the churches that they had raised up (II Cor. 10:10-12, III John 9). The true faith ceased to be taught and practiced in these Christian-professing churches. A few decades after the death of the apostles, those Christians who continued in the true teachings of Jesus Christ were cast out of the churches. In its place an entirely different brand of Christianity arose. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut writes: "We name the last generation of the first century, from 68 to 100 A. D., 'The Age of Shadows,' partly because the gloom of persecution was over the church; but more especially because of all periods in the history, it is the one about which we know the least. We have no longer the clear light of the Book of Acts to guide us; and no author of that age has filled the blank in the history. We would like to read of the later work by such helpers of St. Paul as Timothy, Apollos and Titus, but all these and St. Paul's other friends drop out of the record at his death. **For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A. D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul**" (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 41).

One major difference was that the Christian Passover was no longer being observed as an annual remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ. The apostate churches had replaced the Christian Passover with the weekly observance of the so-called "Lord's Supper." Hurlbut writes, "The Lord's Supper was universally observed. This began as a service in the home, like the Jewish Passover, out of which it was an outgrowth" (*Ibid.*, p. 45).

The subversion of the Christian Passover observance was a major step in Satan's plan to seduce believers into leaving the true faith. This subversion was already underway in the days of the apostles. In I Corinthians 11, Paul strongly

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condemned the practice of eating a meal with the Passover and calling it "the Lord's Supper." As Hurlbut shows, this counterfeit observance became the practice of Christians everywhere: "But among Gentile churches the custom arose of celebrating it [the improper observance of the Passover] at a meeting of the church, as a supper to which each member brought some share of the provision. St. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for abuses that had crept into this method of observance. By the end of the century the Lord's Supper was everywhere a service held at the meeting-place of the Christians, but (probably on account of the persecutions) not in public. All except members of the church were excluded from this celebration, which was held as a 'mystery' " (Ibid., p. 45).

The "mystery of iniquity" that had begun to work in the days of the apostle Paul had fully engulfed the churches, leading the majority of the early believers to reject the observance of the true Christian Passover on the 14th day of the first month, as taught by Jesus Christ and the apostles, and to adopt the weekly observance of "the Lord's Supper." This initial change led to further changes, and the observance of the Lord's Supper was soon replaced by the leaders of the Roman church with the sacrifice of the Mass. This practice, which originated in ancient paganism, is observed by millions of professing Christians in all parts of the world today.

In his book *The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop describes the insidious manner in which the pagan practices and teachings of ancient Babylon were brought into the early Church: "But at its first introduction into the Church, it came in secretly and by stealth, with 'ALL DECEIVABLENESS of unrighteousness.' It wrought 'mysteriously' under fair [sounding] but false pretenses, leading men away from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. And it did so secretly, for the very same reason that idolatry was secretly introduced in the ancient Mysteries of Babylon; it was not safe, it was not prudent to do otherwise. The zeal of the true Church, though destitute of civil power, would have aroused itself, to put the false system and all its abettors beyond the pale of Christianity, if it had appeared openly and all at once in all its grossness; and this would have arrested its progress. Therefore it was brought in secretly, and by little and little, one corruption being introduced after another, as apostacy proceeded, and the backsliding Church became prepared to tolerate it, till it has reached the gigantic height we now see, when in almost every particular the system of the Papacy is the very antipodes of the system of the primitive Church" (page 8).

As Satan had inspired the leaders of Judaism to replace the Word of God with their own traditions, so he inspired the apostate Christian church to substitute human traditions and the teachings of the "early church fathers" for the teachings of Jesus Christ. In a section titled the "Sacrifice of the Mass" (pages 158-165),

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Hislop traces this religious practice to the idolatrous sun-worship of ancient Egypt. The practice that the Roman Catholic Church calls "Communion" or the "Holy Eucharist" originated in the corrupt, ungodly worship of the Egyptian sun-god, and not in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Rather than leading people to Christ, such apostate practices lead people into perdition.

At the close of the apostolic age, God gave the apostle John a vision of the fully developed apostate church, which practices the "mystery of iniquity." In the book of Revelation, this counterfeit religious system is identified as "Babylon the Great." It is a universal church with great power and world dominance: "And one of the seven angels who had the seven vials came and spoke with me, saying to me, 'Come here. I will show you the judgment of the great whore, who sits upon many waters [the waters represent many peoples and nations and languages (verse 15)], with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.' And he carried me away in the Spirit into *the* wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, which had seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and pearls and precious stones, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornications; and on her forehead was a name written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And I was aghast after seeing her, and greatly astonished" (Rev. 17:1-6, *Author's Translation*).

The "mystery of iniquity" will reach the pinnacle of power when Babylon the Great has succeeded in amalgamating all religions under her control. When that is achieved, believers who practice the true faith of Jesus Christ--observing the Christian Passover as He commanded, and keeping the seventh-day weekly Sabbath and the Biblical holy days--will be persecuted and killed.

The words of the apostle Paul show that the "mystery of iniquity" will continue to grow until the return of Jesus Christ: "For the mystery of iniquity is already working; only *there is* one Who is restraining at the present time until it arises out of *the* midst. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and will destroy with the brightness of His coming; *even the one* whose coming is according to *the* inner working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with every deceitful form of unrighteousness in those who are perishing, **because they did not receive the love of the truth, in order that they might be saved. And because of this, God will send them a powerful deception that will cause them to believe the lie;** so

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that all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:7-12, *Author's Translation*).

As the return of Jesus Christ draws near, Satan the devil is employing all the powers and forces of evil to complete his deception of the entire world (Rev. 12:9). One of his greatest deceptions is the perversion and paganization of the Christian Passover. He has so subtly masterminded his false doctrines and practices that they are nearly universally accepted and believed. People through the centuries have become so used to hearing, believing and practicing satanic lies that they cannot believe the truth. To those who have been blinded by Satan's deceptions, the true observance of the Christian Passover seems fanatical and cultish. As an unknown author once wrote, "When a well-packaged web of lies has been sold gradually to the masses over generations, the truth will seem utterly preposterous and its speaker [or writer] a raving lunatic."

Satan has done his job well. He has deceived the professing Christian world with a multitude of false doctrines and practices. He has replaced the true Passover of Jesus Christ with the sacrifice of the Mass and the Lord's Supper. The deception is so pervasive that religious teachers in the Christian churches will not accept the truth of the Bible. The author has personally experienced this closeminded response from a prominent scholar who was taught by Jesuits at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. At the present time, he is a well-known teacher and writer for the Seventh-Day Adventists at Andrews University in Michigan. When he was presented with the first edition of *The Christian Passover*, he perused it until he came to a section which exposed the Eucharist as a false practice. Then he immediately threw the book into the trash, because it was the opposite of what he had been taught. It is shameful that a scholar and teacher who claims to be a seeker of truth would close his eyes to the Scriptural and historical facts.

Too many are so deeply entrenched in the traditions and teachings of men that they refuse to accept the truth of God. The truth of God's Word cuts like a two-edged sword, refuting the false doctrines and practices of apostate Christianity. Because the scope of the deception is so great, and the misinterpretation of Scripture so extensive, it is necessary to address every false argument concerning the Passover and examine each one in the light of God's Word. Then the glorious truth of the Christian Passover will open the door to the true gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why this book was written.

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THIS EDITION IS COMPLETELY REVISED

The second edition of *The Christian Passover* is virtually a new book, having been extensively rewritten and edited. Few pages remain as they were in the first edition. In addition, this second edition contains five new chapters. One chapter explains why the Jews in exile do not keep a 14th Passover. Three chapters explain the significance of the covenant that God made with Abraham on the night of the 14th day of the first month--the day that became the Passover day. Since the first edition was published, much has been learned about covenantal law, which is the basis of God's covenant with Abraham, the Old Covenant with Israel and the New Covenant with the Church. The covenant oath that God made to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 15, was a foretype of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, which established the New Covenant. The fifth chapter that was added shows the prophecies from the Old Testament that were fulfilled by the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.

Since the first edition of *The Christian Passover* was published in 1993, the author has nearly finished translating the New Testament. In this second edition, all Scriptural references from the New Testament use the author's translation. For Old Testament references, many critical Scriptures have been quoted from The Schocken Bible, as translated by Everett Fox.

Other additions and changes include a complete index of Scriptural references, an expanded glossary and bibliography, and an updated and expanded index. Nearly fifty pages of exegetical appendices have been added to deal with the technical aspects of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and difficult-to-understand Scriptures. All these additions have expanded the first edition by over fifty percent, resulting in a second edition of 512 pages.

Every page in this book is dedicated to teaching the true Scriptural observance of the Christian Passover. This ceremony, which Jesus Christ instituted for every believer who enters the New Covenant, is to be observed on the night of the 14th day of the first month--"the night in which He was betrayed." Jesus Christ commands each true believer to participate in the three ordinances of the Christian Passover: 1) the footwashing; 2) eating the unleavened bread, which symbolizes the broken body of Jesus Christ; and 3) partaking of the wine, which symbolizes Jesus Christ's own shed blood for the forgiveness of sin. When observed in the manner that Jesus taught, the Christian Passover truly expresses "the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3).

May God the Father and Jesus Christ grant you an open mind and the ability to understand the full meaning of the true Christian Passover. May God give you

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the faith and courage to love the truth of God and cast aside the deceptive teachings and practices of apostate Christianity, which lead to death. The gift of eternal life comes only through partaking of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ as the true Passover Lamb of God. Jesus said, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world....Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up in the last day; for My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so also the one who eats Me, he also shall live by Me" (John 6:51-57, *Author's Translation*).

May God impart His own love to you, inspiring you to love Him and Jesus Christ with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength, so that you may receive eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ.

Fred R. Coulter
Fall 1999

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Introduction

From the days of Abraham, God has chosen to establish His covenants on the day that He ordained for the Passover to be observed. In Genesis 15, we find the account of God's covenant with Abraham. This special covenant became the foundation for both the Old Covenant with the physical nation of Israel and the New Covenant with spiritual Israel--the Church.

The Scriptural record reveals that God's covenant with Abraham was initiated on the 14th day of the first month. When God began to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt four hundred and thirty years later, this same day became the Passover day. In fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, God initiated His covenant with Israel on the 14th day of the first month. Likewise, the Gospel accounts reveal that Jesus Christ initiated the New Covenant for Christians on the Passover night, the 14th day of the first month, with the introduction of new symbols for the commemoration of the sacrifice of Himself as the true Passover Lamb. He is called **"...the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29, *KJV*). The apostle Paul proclaimed, **"For CHRIST OUR PASSOVER WAS SACRIFICED FOR US"** (I Cor. 5:7, *Author's Translation*).

Christians are commanded by their Lord and Savior to commemorate His sacrifice by observing the New Covenant Passover each year with the new symbols. But Christians who desire to obey Christ's command are faced with conflicting arguments about how and when the New Testament ceremony should be observed. So persuasive are these arguments that many Christians have begun to observe the Passover on the 15th day of the first month. This practice is the result of blending the Scriptural commands with the traditional observance of the Jews, which differs from the ordinances that are recorded in the Old Testament. These ordinances clearly show that God commanded the Passover to be observed on the 14th day of the first month. However, later Jewish practices, introduced before the seventy-year Babylonian captivity in 585 BC and subsequently instituted after the exiles returned to Jerusalem, led to the observance of a 15th Passover. Today, the traditional Jewish practice is to celebrate the Passover entirely on the 15th day of the first month, which is actually the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Until the destruction of the temple in AD 70, the Passover lambs were sacrificed on the 14th. Some Jews killed the Passover lambs at home at the beginning of the 14th, after sunset of the 13th but before dark of the 14th. This

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domestic Passover, as we will see, conformed to the commands of God. Later practice, which became the accepted Jewish tradition, replaced the domestic sacrifice of the Passover lamb with the temple sacrifice of the lamb. Those Jews who participated in the temple sacrifice of the Passover killed the lambs late in the afternoon of the 14th, between the hours of 3 PM and 5 PM, and ate the lambs after sunset of the 14th, as the night of the 15th was beginning. This difference in the time of sacrificing the Passover lambs is the origin of the controversy that is generally referred to as the 14th/15th Passover question. (The Bible reckons days from sunset to sunset, not from midnight to midnight, as does the Roman calendar.)

With the destruction of the temple in AD 70, all sacrificing of Passover lambs ceased. The subsequent exile of the Jews into all nations led to a permanent change in their observance of the 14th Passover. Notice this admission by Samuel Al-Magribi in AD 1484: "Today, however, by reason of our many sins, we are scattered over the four corners of the earth, we are dispersed in the lands of the Gentiles, we are soiled with their ritual uncleanness and unable to reach the House of the Lord, and our status is equivalent to that of persons ritually unclean or traveling far away. That is why **this ordinance of the Passover sacrifice no longer applies to us**, and the reason for this is our father's exceeding disobedience to God and our own following in their sinful footsteps" (Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, p. 206, emphasis added).

Today, the Jews no longer recognize the 14th as the Passover day, with, perhaps, the exception that the firstborn of a family may fast in remembrance of the sparing of the firstborn of Israel in Egypt. The Jews have for centuries observed their Passover on the 15th. The effect of this one-day-late observance is this: The Jews have wholly lost sight of the true meaning of the Passover, which God originally gave to the twelve tribes of Israel, of which the true Jews are descendants of only one tribe. The calculated Hebrew calendar* that the Jews use today specifically designates the Jewish Passover as the 15th day of the first month. Moreover, their calendar labels the entire seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread as Passover.**

As a result, Christians who observe the New Covenant Passover have been confronted with the problem as to which day is correct, the 14th or the 15th. Some groups claim that it is the 14th, and offer many Scriptures to support their belief. Other groups, with equal conviction, point to Scriptures which appear to show that the Passover should be observed on the 15th, as do the Jews. That is the dilemma!

*The first month of the calculated Hebrew calendar does not coincide with the first month of the Roman calendar in use today. On the Roman calendar, the first month of the

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calculated Hebrew calendar falls in the spring of the year between the last ten days of March and about the middle of April. The variation is due to the fact that the months of the Hebrew calendar are based on the lunar cycle, and the months of the Roman calendar are based on the solar cycle. Each year the calculated Hebrew calendar must be consulted to determine where the 14th day of the first month falls on the Roman calendar, since it may occur during March or April.

***To add to the confusion, some Jews keep two days for every holy day. This practice results in a total of nine days of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as Nisan 14 and 15 are kept for the 15th, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and Nisan 21 and 22 are kept for the 21st, the Last Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, this practice is not for the purpose of keeping a 14th Passover, as specifically commanded in the Bible. Rather, it is a two-day traditional observance. This tradition of observing two days for each holy day is practiced at all the annual holy days, with perhaps the exception of the fast day, the Day of Atonement.*

To compound the problem, to this day the Jews adamantly insist that the Passover was not originally observed on the 14th, but has always been observed on the 15th. Is that what the Bible teaches? Is that what history records? If there was always a monolithic practice of a 15th Passover, why is there a 14th/15th controversy in the first place?

Because of these conflicts and the intertwining of Biblical commands and Jewish tradition, buttressed by Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament designed to justify their traditions, various churches of God are divided as to whether they should keep the New Testament ceremony on the 14th or the 15th. Furthermore, there is confusion about what to call this observance, since true Christians understand that they should observe this New Testament ceremony as commanded by Jesus. Should it be called the Passover--or the Lord's Supper, as do many Protestant denominations?

To complicate matters even more, there is confusion as to what the new symbols should be. Should wine and unleavened bread be used, or should it be plain bread and grape juice? Or should, as a few claim, only bread and water be used? There is also confusion as to what is the real meaning of the symbols. Very few truly understand THE ACTUAL SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF THE TRUE NEW TESTAMENT CEREMONY AS TAUGHT BY JESUS CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES.

What are the Scriptural requirements for keeping the New Testament ceremony? This is a most important question. Its proper observance, at the correct time and in the correct manner as commanded by God, is absolutely essential. For Christians, this question is really a matter of life or death--eternal life or eternal death!

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Mainstream Christianity--Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and most fundamental churches--long ago rejected Jesus' command to observe the true New Testament ceremony and replaced it with the Christianized pagan festival of Easter. Additionally, many of these churches offer a weekly or daily communion. But it is not within the scope of this presentation to delve into the paganized traditional practices of those Christian-professing organizations.

This detailed study will deal only with the observance of the Passover as commanded by God and revealed in the Scriptures. It will thoroughly cover the Passover as instituted in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. We will exhaustively examine every aspect to answer every question concerning the Passover, such as: Which day did God establish for the Passover to be observed? What is the proper time of the day? What constitutes keeping the Passover? When did the Passover in Egypt occur? When did the Exodus take place? Do the traditions of the Jews agree with the Bible? If not, why not? Were the Passover lambs originally slain at the beginning of the 14th, or in the late afternoon toward the end of the 14th? When is evening? When is morning? When is night? What does "between the two evenings" mean--from one evening to the next, after sunset, before sunset, from noon to sunset? When did a 15th Passover begin to be observed? If the Passover date was changed, who changed it and why was it changed? When was the temple sacrifice of the Passover lamb instituted? Why was it instituted? Who instituted it? Did all Jews universally have their Passover lambs sacrificed at the temple? Was the practice of sacrificing the Passover lambs at the temple a command of God or a tradition of the Jews? Was the domestic Passover sacrifice at various households, as commanded in Exodus 12, rescinded or changed by God's command? On what day did Jesus keep the Passover? Did Jesus and the disciples practice the temple sacrifice of the lamb, or the domestic sacrifice? What is the meaning of the new Passover ceremony that Jesus instituted? What is the spiritual significance of the footwashing? What is the meaning of the broken bread? What is the meaning of the cup of wine? What does it mean to eat the flesh of Jesus Christ and to drink His blood? Why is it so important to observe this New Testament ceremony? When should it be observed? Should Christians follow the traditions of the Jews, or are these traditions contrary to the commands of Jesus Christ?

What changes did Jesus institute in the observance of the Passover? How did both the Passover of the Old Covenant and the Passover of the New Covenant fulfill God's promises to Abraham? How did the covenant sacrifices that God commanded Abraham to offer foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? How did the timing of the death of Jesus Christ fulfill not only the Passover sacrifice, but every type of sacrifice that God commanded under the Old Covenant?

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WHAT DO THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES TEACH? WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH? WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PAUL COMMAND?

As you can see from the long list of questions, there is a great deal of confusion about how and when the Passover was kept in both Old Testament and New Testament times. However, we know that "...God is not the author of confusion..." (I Cor. 14:33). We also know that the Word of God reveals His truth to those He has called and that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, which will lead us into all truth. We need to diligently study the Bible to be sure that we are "...rightly dividing the Word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). When our study is guided by the Spirit of God and coupled with prayer, while humbly seeking the truth, we can come to a complete and proper understanding of how and when the Christian Passover should be observed. All true Christians should desire to observe it at the proper time and in the proper manner as taught in the New Testament, and should partake of it with a full understanding of its purpose and meaning.

In order to rightly divide the Word of God, in addition to the King James Version, the author has elected to use one of the most accurate translations of the Old Testament that has been published to date. For most passages of the Old Testament, the author has used the earlier translation of the Jewish Publication Society of America, which was first copyrighted in 1917 and republished in 1955. The 1955 edition has the following notation at the end of the preface: "In 1955 the Jewish Publication Society decided to issue a new edition of its translation of the Holy Scriptures set in larger type and produced in more attractive format than its edition of 1917. Advantage was taken of this opportunity to correct a number of typographical errors and to identify the haftarot and other Scriptural readings. **No changes were made in the text of the translation** [emphasis added]."

Subsequent editions of the JPSA contain substantial changes that do not accurately reflect the meaning of the Hebrew text. These later English editions differ greatly from the 1917 and 1955 editions by adding traditional interpretations that do not follow the rules of the Masoretic text, which is recognized as the most authoritative Hebrew text. Although these additions may appear to help the reader's understanding, in many cases they actually change the meaning of key passages to conform to traditional interpretations rather than serving to convey the precise meaning of the Hebrew text. The JPSA editions of 1962 and 1967 contain a number of such additions that are not found in the 1917 and 1955 editions. Some of these changes are very questionable. The new 1985 JPSA edition, TANAKH--The Holy Scriptures, contains even more changes and additions. In the preface of the 1985 edition, we find a frank admission that these changes are based on tradition rather than on the standard Masoretic text, which was used for the 1917

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and 1955 editions: "Thus when a translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Judeo-Arabic vernacular was deemed necessary for Jewry in Moslem countries toward the end of the first millennium, the noted philologist, philosopher, and community leader Saadia Gaon (882-942) produced a version that incorporated traditional Jewish interpretation but was not based on word-for-word translation; at the same time, it was a model of clarity and stylistic elegance. The present version is in the spirit of Saadia." This is an admission of the substantial changes made in the 1985 TANAKH. Indeed there are many critical changes and additions in this text which render it untrustworthy. For this reason, the author did not select it for use in this in-depth study of the Passover.

For the study of passages in the first five books of the Old Testament--known as the Pentateuch--the author has selected an additional translation which uses precise and literal wording to convey the exact meaning of the Hebrew text. This translation is titled *The Schocken Bible: Volume I--The Five Books of Moses*, as translated by Everett Fox from the Ben Asher Hebrew text. This new translation, published by Schocken Books in 1995, adheres to the literal meaning of the Hebrew words that are recorded in the text of the Old Testament. Everett Fox's precise translation of the five books of Moses helps to clarify many hard-to-understand passages. This is particularly true of passages that contain the words "evening," "morning" and "night," which are so critical to understanding the timing of the Passover.

For the study of New Testament passages that relate to the Passover, the author has elected to use his own translation of the Greek text, which is based on the same text used by the translators of the King James Version. This text--the Stephens text of 1550, also known as the Received Text--is acknowledged to be the most accurate Greek text in existence. In translating this Greek text, the author has taken great care to precisely and accurately convey the inspired meaning of every verse and passage. The author's translation of the New Testament is part of his continuous study of New Testament Greek, which he has undertaken in order to make the Word of God more meaningful to every reader. The New Testament Greek text is rich and powerful in its inspiration and expression, and grammatically precise in its meaning. The author has endeavored to convey all of these qualities in his translation.

Since this vital study is dealing with a very complex and controversial subject, it is recommended that the reader begin with the first chapter and read each chapter in sequence--all the way through. It is important to read with an open mind, carefully examining each Scripture as it is presented, and drawing conclusions only after considering all the facts. So many people are adamant in what they believe, with very little regard for the actual facts. In this study, the

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author has endeavored to define all the facts and discuss all the arguments possible in order to present the Scriptural truth. What is presented in the following pages does not agree with many of the beliefs, doctrines, interpretations or traditions of various religious organizations, synagogues and churches. But the Truth of God stands above everyone and will judge us all!

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CHAPTER ONE

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Jesus said that He is the "Beginning and the Ending." The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ is the true Passover Lamb of God for all time by the one perfect sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 7:27; 10:10). Paul declared of Jesus, "For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7, *Author's Translation*). This was the plan of God from the beginning. Jesus was "...the Lamb [of God] slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ there is no remission of sins, no forgiveness of sins before God the Father. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, *Author's Translation*). He is the Beginning!

Jesus Christ is also the Ending. As the Ending, He will complete God's fantastic plan of granting us eternal life: "And He said unto me, 'It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one who is thirsting from the fountain of the water of life freely. The one who is overcoming shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son' " (Rev. 21:6-7, *Author's Translation*). (*The author's translation of the New Testament is used throughout this presentation in order to clarify the meaning of the Greek text. Hereafter the author's translation will be noted as AT.*)

Jesus Christ, Who from the beginning was God and was with God, came to this earth in the flesh to shed His blood as the Passover Lamb of God, in order to deliver us from our sins, and to give us eternal life. When we accept His blood as the sacrifice for our sins and demonstrate our faith in Him by being baptized in His name (Acts 2:38), we are reconciled to God the Father. Our reconciliation with God the Father delivers us from the death penalty for sin and enables us to receive the gift of eternal life.

The gift of eternal life was not offered under the Old Covenant, which held the promise only of physical and material blessings. The New Testament reveals that through the death of Jesus Christ, the Old Covenant has been replaced with the New Covenant--the covenant of grace, which offers eternal life to all who accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. By offering His own body to be slain and His own blood to be shed on the Passover day, Jesus extinguished the Old Covenant and established the New.

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At His last Passover meal with the disciples, Jesus instituted the symbols of the New Covenant, which represent His body and His blood: "Jesus took the bread, and after blessing *it*, broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; **this is My body.**' And He took the cup, and after giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'All of you drink of it. For **this is My blood**, the blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins' " (Matt. 26:26-28, AT).

Jesus Christ commanded His followers--all who have repented of their sins and have accepted the blood of His sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins--to partake of the symbols of the New Covenant each year as a solemn memorial of His death. Jesus said, "This do in the remembrance of Me"! (Luke 22:19, AT.) Every year it is to be a renewal of the New Covenant between the believer, Jesus Christ and God the Father. Partaking of the New Covenant Passover with the new symbols, as Jesus taught, is absolutely essential to remain in the grace of God and to receive the gift of eternal life at the resurrection.

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

The first observance of the Passover by Israel, as recorded in the book of Exodus, was a matter of life or death. If the children of Israel had not carefully followed God's instructions and done exactly as God commanded, when He commanded it to be done, the Lord--Who sent the destroyer to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians--would not have *PASSED OVER* their houses. They would not have been spared from the plague, but would have been slain along with the Egyptians. It was a matter of life and death!

The Old Testament Passover was to be observed yearly by all Israel to reconfirm the Old Covenant. In the broader scope of that covenant, God set before them the same choices of life and good, or death and evil:

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances; then thou shalt live and multiply, and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. But if thy heart turn away...and worship other gods, and serve them; I declare unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish; ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over the Jordan to go in to possess it.

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that

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thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; to love the LORD thy God, to hearken to His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for that is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deut. 30:15-20, The Holy Scriptures, *Jewish Publication Society of America*, hereafter referred to as *JPSA*).

But what about the New Covenant Passover? Why are Christians commanded to partake in this unusual and unique ceremony? Is the New Covenant relationship also a matter of life and death?

In the New Testament, just as in the Old Testament, God has set before us two specific choices: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, *AT*). Jesus Christ is "our Passover," slain for us for the remission of our sins. But we must believe God and accept Jesus Christ His Son, by faith, as the Passover sacrifice of God for the forgiveness of our sins, or we cannot receive eternal life. Without His sacrifice, we will die in our sins--receiving the penalty of eternal death.

Jesus specifically spoke of the sacrifice of Himself as the Passover Lamb of God in this manner: "Truly, truly I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves**" (John 6:53, *AT*). That is a clear, dogmatic statement. There is no middle ground, no compromise!

When we understand the full meaning of the Christian Passover, we find that this yearly reaffirmation of the New Covenant is at the heart and core of the continuous, ongoing spiritual relationship between the believer and God the Father and Jesus Christ. In partaking of the symbols of Christ's body and blood, the believer is not only reaffirming his or her acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, but is also acknowledging that salvation comes through Christ living within:

"For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. **As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father, so the one who eats Me, he shall also live by Me**" (John 6:55-57, *AT*).

(Please note that the author has translated this passage to convey the meaning of the Greek verbal tense. The above translation "the one...who is dwelling in Me" is the most accurate translation of the present tense, active indicative participle. This tense shows the active, ongoing, personal and continuous relationship of a true Christian with Jesus Christ and God the Father.)

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Jesus Christ personally revealed that the observance of the New Covenant Passover is a matter of life or death! He said that those who do not eat His flesh and drink His blood have no life in them--NO ETERNAL LIFE! Eating His flesh and drinking His blood are symbolized by partaking of the bread and the wine of the New Covenant Passover. Jesus also said, when Peter was rejecting the footwashing, "If I do not wash you, YOU DO NOT HAVE ANY PART WITH ME" (John 13:8, AT).

Jesus made it absolutely clear that footwashing is mandatory for His disciples: "Therefore, if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also are obligated to wash one another's feet; because I have given you an example, so that exactly as I have done to you, you also should do" (John 13:14-15, AT).

How many Christian-professing churches love God the Father and Jesus Christ enough to honor His words by fulfilling the ceremony of footwashing? How many churches of God observe the New Covenant Passover exactly as Jesus Christ commanded, including washing one another's feet, as Jesus did?

The ultimate question we need to ask concerning footwashing is this: Do we want a part with Jesus Christ? If the answer is yes, then we ought to do as Jesus Christ commanded. It is so essential, it is so vital to keep the New Covenant Passover as He commanded--partaking of the bread and the wine, and the ceremony of footwashing--that no one can have eternal life without it! Jesus clearly and absolutely said so!

JESUS CHRIST--THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION

Jesus Christ is the ONLY WAY to salvation: "Jesus said to him, '**I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, except through Me**' " (John 14:6, AT). The apostles preached the same message, very powerfully and very dogmatically!

After having miraculously healed a man over forty years old who had been born with a deformity, Peter powerfully proclaimed before the religious leaders and rulers of the Jews, "Be it known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that **in the name of Jesus Christ** of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from among the dead, by Him this man stands in your presence [wholly] sound. This is the Stone which has been set at nought by you builders, which has become the Head of the corner.

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"And there is no salvation in any other, neither is there any other name under the heaven, which has been given among men, by which we must be saved [Greek *dei*, meaning it is absolutely obligatory]" (Acts 4:10-12, *AT*).

God the Father has demonstrated His love for mankind by giving His only begotten Son as the true Passover Lamb, so that all who repent may be delivered from eternal death. As the Scripture says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish, but may have everlasting life" (John 3:16, *AT*). That is how much love God has for the world!

These Scriptures demonstrate the singularly profound importance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as the perfect and complete sacrifice of God the Father for the forgiveness of sins. God the Father has provided the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as full payment for the sins of those whom He calls. Because this loving act of God the Father and Jesus Christ is so profound, those who are called must respond to God's love with their whole being in faith and love. They must completely repent of their sins. Next, they must be baptized in water by complete immersion, symbolizing the death of the old, sinful man by burial in the watery grave. They are thereby co-joined into the death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. When they have fulfilled these conditions, coupled with total commitment and dedication to God, He gives them His Holy Spirit. (Please read and study Acts 2:36-38 and Romans 6:3-6.)

GOD'S LOVE AND OUR LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

Jesus Christ is the crowning glory of God's plan, expressing God's love for each individual He calls. In the fulfilling of this purpose, God's fantastic love will be made manifest to all mankind, all of humanity--past, present and future. God's plan is revealed in the meaning of His holy days, of which the Passover is the beginning--the first step in God's plan of salvation for mankind.

At His last Passover, Jesus revealed the new spiritual relationship with God the Father that is granted to every believer who responds to His calling with love, faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Here are Jesus' own words as recorded by the apostle John:

" 'If you love Me, keep the commandments--namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give another Comforter to you, that it may be with you throughout the age [until Jesus Christ returns]; *even* the Spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive, because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but

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you know it, because it dwells with you, and shall be within you....In that day, you shall know that I *am* in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.

" 'The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.' Judas, not Iscariot, said to Him, 'Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world? '

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will be keeping My word [His teachings], and My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. The one who does **not love Me is not keeping My words**; and the word [the entire message] that you are hearing is not Mine, but the Father's Who has sent Me' " (John 14:15-17, 20-24, AT).

This is the heart and core of the love of God toward us and our love in response to God's love. This is the whole meaning of life for a true Christian. **If we love Jesus Christ, we will be keeping His commandments--and those are from God the Father!**

On the other hand, Jesus gave this warning for those who would be claiming His promises and blessings, using His name and claiming to be His followers, but who would not be keeping the commandments of God: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who is doing the will of My Father Who is in heaven.

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many mighty works of power through Your name?' And then I will profess to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who are working lawlessness' " (Matt. 7:21-23, AT).

The English word "lawlessness" is translated from the Greek word *anomos*, which means "against law"; that is, against law and commandment keeping. This kind of pseudo-Christianity, which uses Jesus' name and claims authority through His name but refuses to do the will of God, is not accepted by God the Father and Jesus Christ. The end result of this pseudo-Christianity is death--not eternal life. And many, the vast majority of people, are on the broad path of destruction which leads to death, exactly as Jesus said (Matt. 7:13-14).

Those who are practicing this pseudo-Christianity are doing the opposite of what Jesus said those who truly love Him will be doing: **"If you love Me, keep the**

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commandments--namely, My commandments" (John 14:15, AT). The one who truly loves God the Father and Jesus Christ will be keeping His commandments--yes, every one of His words--the entirety of His Message.

Here is the first and greatest commandment of all: " 'You shall LOVE *the* Lord your God with ALL YOUR HEART, and with ALL YOUR SOUL, and with ALL YOUR MIND.' This is *the* FIRST and GREATEST commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS" (Matt. 22:37-40, AT). There would be no law, there would be no prophets, there would be no covenants--Abramic, Old or New--without these two commandments. EVERYTHING GOD DOES IS BASED ON LOVE!

The apostle John expresses the love of God so clearly in his first epistle: "Beloved, we should love one another, because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God.

"The one who does not love does not know God, because GOD IS LOVE. In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.

"In this *act* is THE LOVE--not that we loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another....And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. GOD IS LOVE, and the one who is dwelling in love is dwelling in God, and God in him" (I John 4:7-11, 16, AT).

This is the attitude of love, faith and obedience that we must have toward God the Father and Jesus Christ in order to understand the Word of God. Without this love for God and His truth, true understanding of the Scriptures can never be achieved!

SPIRITUAL KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD

There are spiritual keys to understanding Scripture. As we have already learned, we must be continually in a loving, faithful and obedient attitude toward God. This is the foundation of understanding the Word of God.

Another vital principle is clearly taught in Isaiah 28: "Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *Them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts [that is, fully grounded in the

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Word of God]. For **precept *must be upon precept***, precept upon precept; **line upon line**, line upon line; **here a little**, *and there a little*" (verses 9-10, *KJV*).

The Bible tells us that in order to understand doctrine, we must study it line upon line and precept upon precept. That is exactly how we are going to study the Passover question. The New Testament confirms this approach to understanding the Word of God and establishing sound doctrine. Paul instructed Timothy in how to study and teach doctrine: "Diligently *study* to present yourself approved unto God, a workman [in the Word of God] who does not *need to be* ashamed, rightly dividing [precept upon precept, and line upon line] the Word of the truth" (II Tim. 2:15, *AT*).

The Word of God is called the Word of truth. Furthermore, it is the Spirit of truth which teaches us all things. Jesus said, "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one **will teach you ALL THINGS**, and will bring to your remembrance all things that I have told you" (John 14:26, *AT*). This is the promise Jesus gave!

The Bible makes it clear that the Word of truth works hand in hand with the Spirit of truth to give understanding to those who love God and seek His will. It is self-evident that it is not possible for the carnal mind, which is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9), to come to the knowledge of the truth of God. In fact, the carnal, unconverted mind is enmity (that is, hostile) toward God and is not willing to be subject to God's laws (Rom. 8:7). Can the Word of truth and the Spirit of truth work hand in hand with the carnal mind of deceit? It is impossible! Regardless of how brilliant or how great the intellect may be, God's Word is understood not in human wisdom and rationale. It is only through the Spirit of God that the Word of God is understood.

Paul taught that it is not through human rationale or intellect that we are able to come to the knowledge of the truth, but by and through the SPIRIT OF GOD: "But exactly as it has been written, '*The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*'"

"But God has revealed *them* to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, *even* the deep things of God. For who understands the things of man, except *by* the spirit of man which is in him? So also the things of God no one understands, except *by* the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God; which things we also are speaking, not in words imparted by human wisdom, but in *those words* imparted *by* the Holy Spirit, *so*

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that we are communicating [comparing] spiritual things by spiritual means. However, the natural man [the carnal mind of man without the Holy Spirit of God] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; indeed he CANNOT know *them*, BECAUSE THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED" (I Cor. 2:9-14, AT).

This is the way God has instructed us to study and understand His Holy Word. Unfortunately, too many people are caught up in the politics of religion, or the organizational power structure of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, or the time-honored doctrines of various churches, or they have submitted to humanly devised church authority, or they have blindly accepted the teachings of so-called Biblical scholars, and they are not able to open-mindedly study and completely understand the spiritual truth of God's Word.

In this presentation, you can be fully assured that the Biblically outlined method of study--"rightly dividing" the Word of God--will be used. This study is designed to find the actual truth of the Bible as led by the Holy Spirit of truth. It is not designed to find a religious position that will please a doctrinal board, nor is it designed to uphold a previous doctrinal position, nor to justify a "church doctrine." None of these things really matter, do they? And if they were involved, for whatever reason, do we think that God overlooks such deceptive use of His Word? If we think that we can fool God, we are only deceiving ourselves.

Paul's words to Timothy show the danger in misusing the Scriptures: "See that *they* remain mindful of these things, earnestly charging *them* in the sight of the Lord not to argue over words, which does not profit in any way, *but which leads to the* subverting of those who are listening" (II Tim. 2:14, AT). This is exactly what has happened with the Passover question. In order to justify doctrinal beliefs that are not taught in the Bible, many writers and preachers have twisted and distorted the Scriptures to fit their own private interpretations. Whole churches have been subverted by arguments and disputes over words which have not been profitable but have been damaging to faith!

The apostle Peter warned the believers to be on guard against false teachers: "Also, as in all his [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them concerning these things; in which are some things *that are* difficult to understand, which **the ignorant and unstable are twisting and distorting, as they also twist and distort the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.** Now therefore, beloved, *since* you know this in advance, be guarding yourselves against *such practices*, lest you be led astray with the error of the lawless ones, *and* you fall from your own steadfastness" (II Pet. 3:16-17, AT).

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Peter understood that those who promote their own private interpretations are rejecting the Holy Spirit of God, which inspired every word that is written in the Scriptures. Notice: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of anyone's own *private* interpretation; because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20-21, *AT*).

False doctrines and misinterpretations are continually being spread because ministers and teachers use the Word of God deceitfully. How diabolical it is to take the Word of God, which is the truth, and misapply it to create a lie! Such deceptive use of God's Word has existed from the time of the apostles. In writing to the believers at Corinth, the apostle Paul contrasted his ministry with the deceitful approach of false teachers in his day: "Therefore, having this ministry, according as we have received mercy, we are not fainthearted; but **we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain, not walking in cunning craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth we are commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God**" (II Cor. 4:1-2, *AT*).

Anyone who twists and distorts the Scriptures is "using the law unlawfully," as Paul said, and will end up believing false, satanic doctrines, which subvert the souls of men. Unfortunately, the landscape of religious history is filled with the bodies of people who have taught false doctrines, and the bodies of people who have embraced such teachings.

Instead of following the broad way of destruction, as so many have, this study will follow all the Biblical and godly rules of Bible study. Please read and be prepared to apply the Fourteen Rules for Bible Study that are listed below before proceeding with this presentation. These rules show the systematic method and mechanics of proper Bible study.

We will not establish doctrine on the traditions of men, regardless of how knowledgeable or authoritative they are reputed to be. Nor will we base doctrine on the commentaries or other writings of men. We will strictly follow the Word of God. We will also examine history concerning the subject, and we will have detailed studies of the original languages, Hebrew and Greek, in order to determine precise definitions and meanings of key, critically important words. Such an approach will enable us to come to a clear understanding of what the Bible is actually teaching and to arrive at a complete understanding of the answers to the Passover questions.

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FOURTEEN RULES FOR BIBLE STUDY

- 1) Begin with Scriptures that are easy to understand.
- 2) Let the Bible interpret and prove the Bible. Don't look for what you want to prove; look for what the Bible actually proves.
- 3) Understand the context--the verses before and after, the chapters before and after. Does your understanding of a particular verse harmonize with the rest of the Bible?
- 4) Understand the original language, Hebrew or Greek. Never try to establish dogmatic doctrine or teachings by using *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. It can be helpful at times, but it is extremely limited.
- 5) Ask, what does the Scripture clearly say?
- 6) Ask, what does the Scripture not say?
- 7) Ask, who was the book written to?
- 8) Ask, who wrote it?
- 9) Ask, who said it?
- 10) Understand the time frame in history when the book was written.
- 11) Base your study on Scriptural knowledge that you already understand. What do you know up to this point in time?
- 12) Do not allow your own personal assumptions or preconceived notions to influence your understanding and conclusions.
- 13) Do not form conclusions based on partial facts or insufficient information, or the opinions and speculations of others.
- 14) Opinions, regardless of how strongly you feel about them, don't necessarily count. Scripture must be your standard and guide.

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This is the complete study approach. When undertaking a study of the Bible, we should always use this approach, coupled with prayer, trusting God to lead us with His Holy Spirit of truth. We know that He will fulfill His promise to lead us into ALL TRUTH, as we seek the answers to the Passover question--the 14th or the 15th--and the full meaning of the Christian Passover.

Following these rules of Bible study, we will begin in Chapter Two with basic and simple-to-understand Scriptures concerning the meaning of the name "Passover."

- These selections from Mr. Coulter's Revised & Expanded Second Edition of the book, *The Christian Passover*, are taken from the *Christian Biblical Church of God* Website at: <http://www.cbcg.org/>.

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