

Foregleams  
Of  
The  
Messiah



By  
CHARLES  
F.  
REDEKER

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Messiah*

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Old Testament Passover Type  
Sheds Light on Identity of the Messiah

1982-2002

[www.zionstower.com](http://www.zionstower.com)  
[zion's.tower.ofthemorning@juno.com](mailto:zion's.tower.ofthemorning@juno.com)

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C.F.R.  
September, 1982

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## INTRODUCTION

Would you like to turn back the hands of time and embark upon a research voyage to the land of ancient Egypt? That is where we will have to go in search of the background material needed to begin this study. But it will not be the glory of Egypt which will be our concern: our attention must be directed instead toward a Semitic people who by the vicissitudes of the time became dependent upon the granaries of that land and were permitted to settle in the region of Goshen. These were the Biblical chosen people, the descendants of Abraham and Jacob, known as the Israelites.

The Bible narrative of the sojourning of Joseph and his brethren and of the eventual settling and enslaving of the Israelites in Egypt will take us back more than 3,500 years. Hardly more than a century ago, the Bible stood virtually alone as the sole source of historical evidence bearing on this subject. Even to this day, no other ancient documents have been found which could be cited as direct verification of the Bible account. Yet very recently scholars have uncovered quite a few sources other than actual written records which more than amply serve the same purpose:

Egyptian tomb paintings have been found which provide evidence of the entrance of various nomads from the land of Canaan.<sup>1</sup> Several well-preserved and colorful paintings depict Canaanite delegations being received by Pharaoh, the King of Egypt;<sup>2</sup> another shows an Egyptian official selling corn to Semites from Canaan;<sup>3</sup> and still another, from the 15th century B.C., portrays light-skinned Semites among the dark-skinned slaves and workmen making bricks to be used in rebuilding a temple.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*, pp. 68-71.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Avi Yonah, *Our Living Bible*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>3</sup> Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105 and Avi Yonah, *op. cit.*, p. 43.



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In addition, archeologists have uncovered the remains of the Biblical city of Raamses, where the Israelites were pressed into servitude, known to the Egyptians as Pi-Ramses-Meri-Amun. In these ruins, located 30 miles southwest of Port Said, were found sphinxes, buildings and granaries.<sup>5</sup> Egyptologists have confirmed the accuracy of the names, places, and customs alluded to in the Biblical record.<sup>6</sup> And in a very unique approach to the problem, language experts in their study of the Hebrew have discovered unmistakable Egyptian influences upon that language, modifications which only could have been produced by a lengthy encounter with Egyptian customs.<sup>7</sup>

A professor of ancient Near Eastern civilizations comments as follows:

"Is the whole story of Passover, as it is told in Jewish tradition, a mere figment of fancy--a pious invention? Or . . . is there independent evidence, outside of the Bible, for the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, its servitude under the Pharaohs, and its exodus therefrom?

"The answer is that, while there is yet no direct confirmation of details, and while neither sojourn nor exodus is in fact recorded in any known contemporary document, *the story as a whole--*apart, of course, from its purely miraculous elements--*is thoroughly consistent with all that we now know of the history of the Ancient Near East.*"<sup>8</sup>

Armed with this information, we may begin our historical voyage in the certainty that we are dealing with events that actually took place and that our inquiry will not be concerned with mere legendary happenings.

***The Passover and Its Importance.*** In this excursion, our attention will be focused in particular upon one ceremony of the Israelites--the Passover. According to the Bible record, the Passover was introduced by God, together with the final plague upon Egypt, as the means of extricating His chosen people from their plight in a hostile land. It is an occasion which has taken on the greatest significance to the Jews. It serves as a reminder of the peculiar circumstances attached to the birth of their nation and of the overruling providences of Almighty God on their behalf.

Throughout the years of their history and especially in foreign lands, the Jewish people have endured hardships and sometimes risked death to carry out the Passover celebration. To them, the

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<sup>5</sup>Keller, *op. cit.*, pp.107-108.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>7</sup>A. S. Yahuda, *Accuracy of the Bible.*

<sup>8</sup>Theodor Herzl Gaster, *Passover, Its History and Traditions*, pp. 29-30.

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ceremony was closely linked to their spiritual vitality and to their very identity as a people. Today it is still one of the most colorful and solemn of all Jewish religious rituals, and has come to symbolize the hope for the ultimate redemption of the people of Israel.

But as important as this occasion has been to the Jew, we think there is something about the Passover that holds special interest to the Christian as well. More than being merely an ancient festival, the Passover portrays truth of universal significance which unfortunately for the most part has escaped the notice of both Jew and Christian alike.

What profound truth do we think has been overlooked? First, we would suggest that many of the details of the Passover are figurative of grander events to come in the history of the world, portraying in picture form the method by which salvation would be brought to the entire human family. And second, that within this picture, hidden in the instructions of Jehovah God relating to the selection and slaying of the paschal lamb, are important clues identifying the personage of the one whom we shall call "the Messiah of prophecy."

***Messianic Predictions.*** In reflecting on the unique aspect of Jewish messianic hopes, Abba Eban, eloquent spokesman for Israel and its causes, has this to say:

"One of Israel's original gifts to the world is her belief in the messianic age, her 'clear expectation ... of the restoration of the good conditions of Paradise by which history might be consummated.' Even the Greeks, the most original and civilized people in the ancient world, had no real messianic doctrine; the Jews alone harbored this dream of world-wide peace and justice. They alone among all the ancient peoples spoke not of a golden age in the past, but of a golden age in the future. They alone, therefore, could break through the deterministic view of history which was held by all other ancient peoples, and point away from fatalism to the bright possibilities of human progress ...

"[In] messianism ... personal salvation becomes secondary to the goal of collective redemption, the salvation of an entire people and the achievement of universal peace. A further distinction must be made--a distinction between the messianic expectation and the more explicit belief in a personal Messiah. The messianic expectation is, in essence, the prophetic hope for political freedom and moral redemption which is to be followed by earthly bliss for all peoples. The belief in the personal Messiah, on the other hand, involves us more directly in Jewish mysticism and theology, wherein the particular conditions of the Messiah's appearance, the traits of his character, and time sequence of his actions become of paramount importance."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Abba Eban, *My People. The Story of the Jews*, pp. 243-245.

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The traditional Jewish expectation of a Messiah has centered about numerous Old Testament prophecies pointing forward to the coming of a great deliverer. In Psalm 2 and 110, the Lord's anointed one is spoken of as a great King who will subdue all the unrighteous rulers of the nations, as he assumes complete control of earth's affairs:

***"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed ... Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion... I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Psalm 2***

Psalm 72 represents the Messiah's reign as bringing equity and justice to all people, especially the weak and oppressed:

***"He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment [justice]. The mountains [kingdoms] shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills [local governments], by righteousness ... He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor ... In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth ... His name shall endure forever ... and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." Psalm 72***

Isaiah prophesied strongly of the one who was to come and the results of his reign:

***"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." Isa. 9:6-7***

***"Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment ... And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isa. 32:1,17-18***

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***"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert ... And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it ... but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isa. 35:5-6, 8-10***

Whereas the traditional Jewish expectations focused upon the majesty and power of the coming Messiah, a broader conception of him also emanates from the body of Old Testament literature. Through descriptive types, pictures, and prophecies, suffering and humiliation are pointed to as a part of Messiah's role. He is portrayed as the Redeemer who offers himself in sacrifice as the atonement for man's sin.

The writer of Genesis, in symbolic language, speaks of the "seed of the woman" who would eventually bruise the "head of the serpent:"

***"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [he--the seed of the woman] shall bruise thy head, and thou [the serpent] shalt bruise his heel." Gen. 3:15***

This text has been taken as the earliest divine promise of a future Messiah, foretelling his destruction of the chief opponent of God. But notice that it also reveals that God's Holy One, the "seed of the woman," was himself to suffer a setback--the "bruising of his heel."

This is followed by numerous accounts of animal sacrifices which were commonplace during the early period of man's history. It was through such sacrifices that the earliest believers and patriarchs were able to gain access to God. These all pointed forward to the necessity of the death of a righteous individual who would take upon himself the condemnation that rested upon Adam and his posterity for disobedience to the divine law. By releasing mankind from the death penalty, such a Redeemer would set the stage for a reconciliation of the fallen race with its Creator.

Later, as part of the Law Covenant with Israel, Jehovah God established the Tabernacle arrangement, whereby the sins of Israel could be typically cleansed from year to year. This was done

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through sacrifices of specified animals, and many of the details of this procedure prefigured the grander sacrifice which was to be made by God's Suffering Servant.<sup>10</sup> See Lev. 16.

The prophet Isaiah was given perhaps the greatest insight into the sacrificial aspect of the Redeemer's work, as shown in his inspired utterances in the 53rd chapter:

***"We indeed esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Yet he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement for our peace was upon him; and through his bruises was healing granted to us. We all like sheep went astray; every one to his own way did we turn; and the Lord [Jehovah] let befall him the guilt of us all. He was oppressed, and he was also taunted, yet he opened not his mouth; like the lamb which is led to the slaughter, and like a ewe before her shearers is dumb; and he opened not his mouth ... He had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth." (Leeser)***

***"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief... Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ... He hath poured out his soul unto death and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." (King James) Isa. 53***

How does the Passover picture fit into this chain of types and prophecies? We believe that it has a very unique contribution to make. It provides the link between God's Suffering Servant as depicted by Isaiah and the Deliverer of Promise who was destined to make of Israel a great nation. In one broad picture we have portrayed the roles of both the Redeemer and the Deliverer: first we are shown the innocent lamb whose blood had to be shed and sprinkled in accordance with a prescribed ritual; and second, Moses emerges as the great leader who was raised up to deliver his people out of bondage.

As our study unfolds, we will see in detail how the paschal lamb and the circumstances of its slaying offer definite clues for identifying the Redeemer. Later, we will also see who is pictured by Moses and who ultimately will deliver not only Israel but the whole groaning creation out of its bondage to sin and death. And finally, we hope to make clear both from the Scriptures and from the evidences of history that it is one individual who will have the honor of carrying out both roles, to the glory of God and the blessing of mankind.

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<sup>10</sup>See Charles T. Russell, *Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices*.

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**Unraveling Obscure Details.** We will be examining the practices connected with the Passover in some detail, particularly in relation to time features. We cannot hope to recognize precise fulfillments of events if their exact order and timing in the type are not clearly understood. For purposes of our discussion, we will use the term "type" to refer to the original Passover ceremony and "antitype" to describe any later fulfillments.

In any study of human affairs going back several thousand years, it is self evident that the mere passage of the centuries would tend to obscure many of the original details of the events. Languages and customs change, records are lost, and even the traditions which survived may not have been preserved in their purity. Fortunately in the case of the Passover, we have the Old Testament text describing the occasion in considerable detail.

Nevertheless, when it comes to ascertaining certain time relationships within the original Passover ceremony, we find that the Old Testament is not as direct and clear as we would like it to be. As a consequence, we do not find unanimity of interpretation amongst those who have studied this subject. But the recent availability of added knowledge respecting the Jewish tradition has raised the challenge of reexamining the Scriptures and renewing efforts to arrive at the correct understanding.

One of the main problems concerns the time of day when the Passover lamb was originally slain. According to the Jewish custom, the day was reckoned as beginning and ending at sunset (6 P.M.) rather than at midnight. At what point during this day was the lamb slain: was it at the beginning of the 14th day of Nisan (after 6 o'clock, after sunset, in the darkness and ***in the evening***)? Did it occur near the close of the day (before 6 o'clock, during the daylight but ***toward the evening***)? Or was it proper for the lamb to be slain anytime during the course of the twenty-four hour day allotted for this purpose? With this question resolved, most of the other activities pertaining to the Passover and the start of the Exodus would fall neatly into place.

In carrying out this study, we have attempted to harmonize the Scriptural teachings with the latest findings of scholars interested in this area. We believe that truth in all fields, regardless of its source or the means of its uncovering, is absolute in nature. When once correctly determined, it cannot be refuted at a later date. Additional truths which may be discovered will serve only to supplement and enhance the original, certainly not to contradict it. If, then, the correct time relationships of the Passover are determined, first from the Scriptures and secondly from other available evidence, it should be possible to combine the two into one harmonious whole.

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Perhaps some have felt that a concentrated study of time features of the Bible is of little importance or relevance to the affairs of our day, particularly in such a remote picture as the Passover. Yet in this instance we are convinced that there are matters of the greatest significance which are interwoven here, bearing as they do upon the question of the identity of the Messiah of prophecy. The correct unraveling of the details of this type corroborate other Scriptures which indicate the Messiah will be an individual and not an earthly nation, as supposed by some contemporary authorities. And the correlation of the Passover's teachings with time prophecies of the Bible relating to the appearance of the Messiah make this a very up-to-date study indeed, well worth the effort to investigate.

It is our hope that this fresh examination of the time features of the Passover will lead us to a greater appreciation of the great God who designed it all from the beginning; that we will see reflected therein something of the foresight and unsearchable wisdom of the Creator, the Timekeeper of all events. As the beauty and order of this ritual of old unfold before us, let us be conscious of the fact that an even grander and more noble event is pictured here, one which concerns the deliverance of every human being from the shackles of sin and death. And in particular, let us note what remarkable foregleams and evidences of the Messiah of promise have also been preserved in the details of this ceremony.

# **PART ONE – UNRAVELING THE PASSOVER TYPE**

## **I. GENERAL DISTINCTIONS**

The Passover celebration has traditionally been one of the most important, as well as colorful, of all the Jewish festivals. According to the Old Testament, it originated in Egypt at the time of the servitude of the Israelites. Basically, it consisted of two parts:

The first was the sacrificial features, which included the slaying of a lamb and the sprinkling of its blood upon the doorposts and lintels of the houses. The sight of the blood was to act as a deterrent to the death angel, causing him to "pass over" and spare the Jewish homes from the effects of the tenth plague inflicted upon Egypt. The second part was the feasting, which on the second anniversary of the Passover, became a seven days' feast of unleavened bread, in commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt.

We will begin our investigation by noting in a general way some of the broad distinctions between the two basic parts of the festival. This will lay the groundwork for a more detailed study in ensuing chapters, which will concentrate particularly on the time features involved. Only by obtaining a clear picture of the time relationships within the Passover type can we appreciate the full beauty of the reality, the antitype, which will constitute the second half of this presentation.

*The Paschal Offering on the 14th Day.* God commanded that the lamb was to be slain on the 14th day of the month Nisan (or Abib), which occurs in the spring about the early part of April. So important was this occasion deemed, that Abib was to become the beginning of months in the Jewish religious calendar, thus serving to set the Israelites apart from surrounding nations. The sacrificing of the paschal lamb on the 14th of Nisan remained the unvarying practice of the Israelites throughout the course of their history until the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem



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in 70 A.D. Listed here are some of the Scriptures verifying the day of sacrifice, arranged in chronological order:

- (a) At the original Passover in Egypt (about 1616 B.C.)--*Exod. 12:2-6 (Leeser): "A lamb without blemish ... and ye shall have it in keeping until the 14th day of the same month; and then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it."*
- (b) During the wilderness journey (one year later)--*Num. 9:1-5 (Leeser): "And they prepared the passover-lamb on the 14th day of the first month toward evening in the wilderness of Sinai."*
- (c) In Joshua's time (upon entering the land, about 1576 B.C.)--*Josh. 5:10 (Leeser): "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and they prepared the passover-offering on the 14th day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho."*
- (d) In Hezekiah's time (the first year of his reign, about 746 B.C.)--*2 Chron. 30:15 (Leeser): "And they slaughtered the passover-sacrifice on the 14th day (of the second month)."* The offering of the sacrifice a month late was an exception to the general practice, necessitated by the backsliding of the people and King Hezekiah's determination to re-institute the celebration of the Passover, even if a month late.
- (e) In Josiah's time (the 18th year of his reign, about 643 B.C.)--*2 Chron. 35:1,18 (Leeser): "And they slaughtered the passover-sacrifice on the 14th day of the first month."*
- (f) In Zerubbabel's time (about 525 B.C.)--*Ezra 6:19 (Leeser): "And the children of the exile prepared the passover-(sacrifice) on the 14th day of the first month."*
- (g) In Jesus' day--The evidence will be presented subsequently to show that the paschal lambs were still slain on the 14th day of Nisan during the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

References corroborating the slaying of the lamb on the 14th day from sources other than the Bible are readily secured. A Jewish Rabbi comments as follows:

"Passover or PESACH is the offering of a sacrifice that is called 'passover,' the paschal offering. The sacrificial ceremony ... was observed on the 14th."<sup>1</sup>

Numerous additional sources to be referred to shortly will also make mention of the paschal sacrifice.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Rabbi Solomon Poll, Congregation Ahavath Israel, Trenton, New Jersey, Feb. 17, 1956.

General Distinctions

There were other important activities which were carried out on the 14th day. In ancient Jewish custom, a considerable portion of the day was devoted to searching for and eliminating all leaven from the home. Not until this had been performed in scrupulous manner could the lamb be slain and the remainder of the passover activities be entered into. In the next chapter, we will look further into the details of this activity.

***The Feast of Passover on the 15th Day.*** The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread occurred on the 15th day of the month Nisan (or Abib). This feast was to continue for seven days, with the first (15th) and last (21st) days being holy convocations or assemblies. The following Scriptures serve to confirm this quite clearly:

***"On the 15th day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days must ye eat unleavened bread. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation unto you; no servile work shall ye do thereon ... on the seventh day is a holy convocation; no servile work shall ye do." Lev. 23:6-8 (Leeser)***

***"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread ... And on the first day there shall be a holy convocation and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation to you ... And ye shall observe the unleavened bread; for on this selfsame day have I brought forth your armies out of the land of Egypt [on the 15th day, see Num. 33:1-3]; therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations as an ordinance for ever." Exod. 12:14-19 (Leeser)***

A Jewish Rabbi offers the following definition:

"Passover, the holiday of Passover, is the feast of unleavened bread which is called in Hebrew CHAG HAMATZOS, or in common term Passover (the holiday of Passover) ... The holiday of Passover was always celebrated on the 15th day of Nisan."<sup>2</sup>

A Christian writer comments on this feast day as follows:

"The Feast of the Passover, celebrated every year for seven days, began with the 15th day of the first month. It celebrated in a general way the deliverance of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt--but particularly the passing over, or sparing alive, of the first-born of that nation during the plague of death which came upon the Egyptians ... The passing over of the first-born of Israel became the precursor of the liberation of the whole nation of Israel, and their passing in safety over the Red Sea into freedom from the bondage of Egypt. We can

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<sup>2</sup>Rabbi Solomon Poll, *loc. cit.*

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readily see that so portentous an event would properly be commemorated by the Israelites as intimately identified with the birth of their nation; and thus it is celebrated by Jews to this day."<sup>3</sup>

There are several important questions which must be raised in connection with the feast on the 15th day, which we will consider in detail in a separate chapter because of their complexity. We want to analyze the activities of this first day and concentrate in particular on the matter of meals. Was the feast at the beginning (evening) of the 15th separate and distinct from the Passover supper--the eating of the paschal lamb and bitter herbs? Or in reality was this feast one and the same with the Passover supper?

These and related matters need considerable clarification before we can understand the relationship of the various activities of the Passover ritual. Unfortunately, as we shall discover, with the passage of the years these matters have become quite obscure and now require considerable effort to unravel to our reasonable satisfaction.

***The Period of Passover.*** A general description of this period is given in the following encyclopedia reference. Note that all the components are referred to here: the paschal offering on the eve of the Festival (the 14th day or day of preparation), the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th, and the entire festival of seven days' duration:

*"Passover (Heb. 'Pesah'):* First of the three festivals of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, it begins on Nisan 15. The traditional interpretation of the Hebrew name is from the root 'pass over' (Exod. 12:13) ... The festival is observed for 7 days (8 outside Israel) ... Properly, the name applies only to the paschal sacrifice and the first day, the entire festival being called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first and last day (outside Israel, the first two and last two days) are festivals, and the intermediate period, 'Hol ha-Moed' [secular days of the holiday] ... It is prohibited to eat or possess leaven for the duration of the festival during which only unleavened bread (Matzah) is consumed.

"In Temple times, the paschal lamb was slaughtered on the eve of the festival and eaten on the first night. After the Destruction, the home celebration (Seder) of the first night was retained and the Haggadah read ..." ["Seder"--Hebrew word meaning "order of service;" the accompanying recital known as "Haggadah" means "story"-- the recounting of the original Passover narrative and the escape from Egypt.]<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Charles T. Russell, *The New Creation* ("Studies in the Scriptures" series, Vol. 6), p. 457.

<sup>4</sup>Cecil Roth, Editor-in-chief, "Passover," *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 1481-1482.

General Distinctions

In the Scriptures, the word "Passover" is a general term. It may denote the 14th day, the 15th day, or even the entire Passover period, including all the days of feasting. It is not always clear, therefore, what specific day is alluded to when the word "Passover" is used. We think this can be illustrated in both the Old and New Testaments.

Turning first to the Gospel of John, we find at least one reference where the word "Passover" seems to refer to the celebration on the 15th day. This is in John 19:13,14, where the writer was particularly concerned with establishing the time that Jesus of Nazareth was arraigned before Pilate. Thus, **"Pilate ... brought Jesus forth ... and it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour."** What is meant by the expression **"preparation of the passover?"** John 18:28 indicates that the Jews who had taken Jesus to the hall of judgment had not yet partaken of the Passover meal. Since the Jews were still occupied in preparing the lambs for sacrifice, the 15th or feast day could not have commenced. The "preparation," then, would seem to refer to the 14th day, and "passover" to the 15th.

On the other hand, in Matthew 26:18 "Passover" would seem to apply to the 14th day, when Jesus and his disciples partook of the meal: **"The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."** (The detailed justification for this assumption that the 14th day is referred to here will be supplied later.) And in Luke 22:1, a very broad usage of the word "Passover" is found, for here it seemingly refers to the entire period of the Festival: **"Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover."**

In the Old Testament, we find a similar pattern. Turn to 2 Chron. 35:16-18 (Leeser). Here is a description of the zealous efforts of King Josiah to hold the Passover celebration in strict conformity with the law of God, after having the books of the Law restored and realizing that his immediate forefathers had been in total ignorance of God's commands. Verse 16 reads: **"So was established all the service of the Lord on the same day, to prepare the passover-sacrifice."** This is a clear reference to the work of the 14th day. Verse 17 goes on to mention that the Israelites also "(kept) the feast of unleavened bread seven days." And in verse 18 the grand summation reads: **"There was not holden any passover like this in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; and all the kings of Israel did not keep such a passover as Josiah kept."** Here "passover" seems to be a reference to the entire period involved, from the slaying of the lamb to the end of the joyous days of feasting and celebrating.

General Distinctions

We mention the Scriptural usage of "Passover" to prevent any from concluding that this word is invariably associated with the passing of the death angel that followed the special meal, and with that event only. True, the passing over or sparing of their firstborn was very important to the Israelites and this undoubtedly was the primary basis for the word "Passover." But we must not lose sight of the fact that there were other activities and rites performed which were related to this event and Scripturally were also referred to by the same word.

In recent years, some modifications have been made in the official Passover schedule. In the 18th century, an eighth day was added to the Festival of Unleavened Bread, especially for those Jews living outside of Israel. Accordingly, the current Jewish calendar marks the 15th day of Nisan as the "First Day of Passover," and the 22nd day of Nisan as the "Eighth Day of Passover." With the sacrifice of the lamb discontinued since the destruction of the Temple, the 14th day and its significance is no longer mentioned.

## **II. SLAYING THE LAMB: AT THE BEGINNING OR ENDING OF THE 14TH DAY?**

*"In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb ... a lamb for an house ... And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." Exod. 12:3, 6*

It is in regard to the timing of the slaying of the lamb that special attention will now be directed. It is clear from the account that the lamb was to be slaughtered on the 14th day, *"in the evening,"* (*"between the two evenings"* in the literal Hebrew); but just what was meant by this expression? Was a definite time of sacrifice being set forth, or was this a vague and general expression? While this may appear to be a trifling matter of mere academic interest, the answer to this question is important. If indeed it can be correctly determined, it will provide us with a unique clue to be used later in helping to identify the person of the Messiah.

*Slaying the Lamb*

Before coming to grips with this issue, we want to examine a preliminary activity of the 14th day of Nisan--that of searching the houses for leaven. An understanding of how the early hours of this day were spent will clarify the order of the events which were to follow.

***The Search for Leaven.*** We begin our investigation into the time features of the Passover by noting at what hours the leaven was removed from the homes in preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Only passing reference to this requirement is made in the Scriptures; the passage is found in the book of Exodus:

***"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; but on the first day ye shall have put away leaven out of your houses; for whosoever eateth leavened bread, that soul shall be cut off from Israel, from the first day until the seventh day." Exod. 12:15 (Leeser)***

The "first day" which is mentioned here has reference to the 15th day of the month, or the beginning of the seven days' feast; the "seventh day" therefore is the 21st day of the month, the closing day of the feast. Since more will be said of this Passover period subsequently, we will not elaborate upon it here. The point we wish to emphasize now is that when this "first day" (15th) had begun, according to *Leeser* all the leaven had already been put away ("***ye shall have put away leaven out of your houses***"--past tense). By Scriptural inference, then, the leaven must have been removed on the previous day, that is, the 14th. Presently we will see how this has formed the basis for the Jewish tradition of the ceremony of BEDIKAT CHAMETZ.

We note in passing that other prohibitions against the use of leaven, apart from the Passover celebration, are mentioned in the Old Testament. But the Hebrew Scriptures themselves do not supply the reasoning behind the prohibition, leaving it a matter of speculation through the centuries. To this day in Jewish circles, it remains somewhat of an enigma. Perhaps one of the most meaningful commentaries on it has been supplied by the Cabalist rabbis of medieval times:

"Leaning heavily on allegory and symbolism, they described leaven as being a corrupting element in the dough. They also said, figuratively speaking, that it was the symbol of the Yetzer ha-Rah, the Inclination to Evil which is concealed deep in the heart of man."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan Ausubel, "Passover," *The Book of Jewish Knowledge*, pp. 325-326.

Slaying the Lamb

Coming now to the Jewish tradition which evolved from the Mosaic injunction against leaven, we quote from two Jewish sources. They are quite adequate in describing both the interesting details of the ceremony and the time features involved:

- (a) *"The night before Passover Eve, in those homes where tradition is closely followed, the ceremony of BEDIKAT CHAMETZ takes place. The head of the household makes a diligent search in all possible places for CHAMETZ, leavened bread. This is because throughout the eight days of Passover only MATZOH, unleavened bread, may be eaten. Not a single crumb of bread is allowed to remain in the home. The custom since ancient times is for the searcher to carry a candle with him, and to sweep any bread crumbs he finds into a wooden spoon with a whisk made of several chicken or goose feathers ... The following morning, the leaven he has put aside is burned, and the ritual law requires that leavened bread may not be eaten after mid-morning on that day."*<sup>2</sup>
- (b) "The interdiction against eating or using HAMEZ [leaven] becomes operative at noon of the 14th of Nisan, but as a precaution the Rabbis set the limit an hour earlier and even advise refraining from eating leavened food after ten in the morning.

“The proper removal of HAMEZ constitutes one of the chief concerns of rabbinical law and practice. Great care is enjoined in the inspection and cleaning of all possible nooks and corners, lest HAMEZ be overlooked. *The night preceding the 14th of Nisan was especially set apart for this inspection* by candle-light or lamp-light, not by moonlight, though it was not necessary to examine by candle-light places that were open to the sunlight ...

“In practice this BEDIKAT HAMEZ was effected as follows: As soon as night (on the 13th) had completely set in, the father of the household lighted a plain wax taper, took a spoon and a brush or three or four entire feathers, and ... made the complete round of the house and gathered up all the leavened bread that was in it ... [He then] pronounced this benediction: ‘Blessed be Thou ... who hast commanded us to remove the leaven.’ ... Next morning ... the bundle and its contents [leaven] were either sold or

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<sup>2</sup>Ausubel, "Passover," *Pictorial History of the Jewish People*, p. 28.

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burned before six o'clock in the evening; only so much leaven was retained as would be needed up to ten in the morning...<sup>3</sup> [Italics in both citations added for emphasis.]

The references to the time features of this ceremony could be somewhat confusing if taken individually; only when taken as parts of the whole do they become clear. Perhaps the clearest of all the statements in the above excerpts is, "The interdiction against eating or using HAMEZ becomes operative at noon of the 14th of Nisan." Using this time as a starting point for our thinking, it is possible to trace the main aspects of the search for leaven back to its beginning in the evening preceding. To help in clarifying this matter, Exhibit A, a chart entitled "The Search For Leaven," was prepared, to which reference should now be made.

The chart shows that the expressions "the night before Passover Eve," the "night (on the 13th)," and "the night preceding the 14th," as used in the above excerpts, all have reference to the beginning of the 14th day. Since the Jewish day begins with sunset, night or evening of the 13th day shown on the calendar is actually the beginning of the 14th, and this must be kept in mind in understanding these expressions. Thus the search for leaven took place in the darkness beginning the 14th day, with the head of the house carrying a candle, and whatever leaven was found was placed aside until the next morning. In the daylight hours of the next morning, which was still the 14th day, the bundle of leaven was burned; only as much as could be consumed by ten or so in the morning was retained. This procedure insured that no leaven would remain by the noon hour of the 14th day, in accordance with the ritual law.

With these time aspects of the search for leaven clearly before us, we are now in a position to move on with our investigation of the more important activity which followed on the 14th day--that of sacrificing the lamb.

***An Obscure Hebrew Expression.*** Our common version Bible states that the passover lamb was to be slain "*in the evening.*" (Exod. 12:6) If we could accept this translation as being accurate and if at that time the Israelites reckoned the beginning and ending of the day in the same manner as we do now, we would not have too much difficulty in understanding the verse. Unfortunately, however, it appears that neither of these premises is correct. We must, therefore, do some intellectual digging in order to arrive at a correct understanding of what is meant by this time expression.

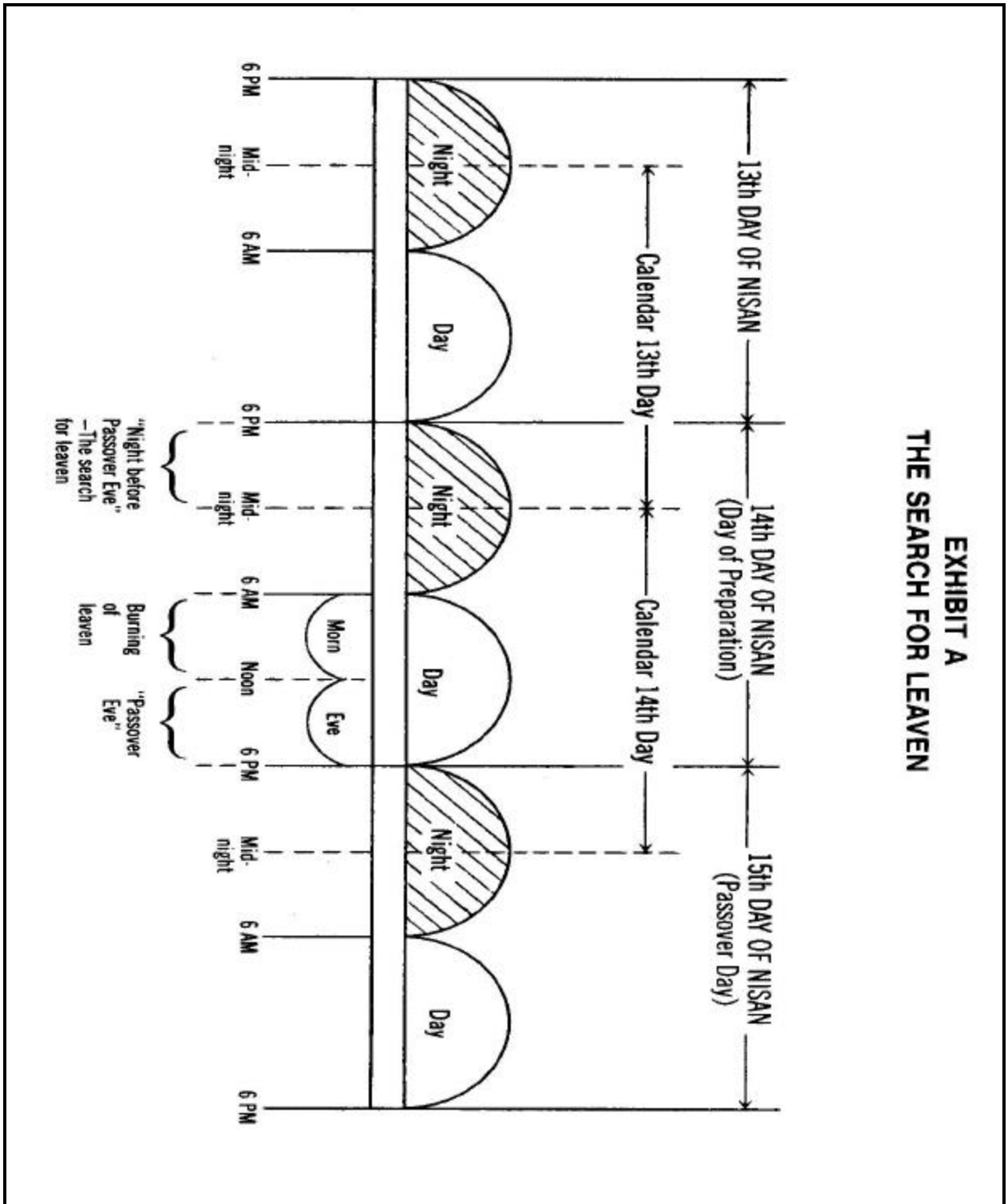
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<sup>3</sup>Isidore Singer, (ed.), "Passover--in Rabbinical Literature," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, IX., 550-553.



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**EXHIBIT A**  
**THE SEARCH FOR LEAVEN**



Slaying the Lamb

The literal Hebrew for Exod. 12:6 is "*between the two evenings*," as shown by the marginal notation in many Bibles. The rendering of this text in various translations is given below:

**EXHIBIT B**  
**REPRESENTATIVE TRANSLATIONS OF EXODUS 12:6**

*Group I*

Luther: *"shall kill it between evenings."*  
Jerusalem: *"shall slaughter it between the two evenings."*  
New World: *"must slaughter it between the two evenings."*  
Rotherham: *"slay it between the two evenings."*

*Group II*

Leeser: *"shall kill it toward evening."*  
Amer. Stand.: *"shall kill it at even."*  
Douay: *"shall sacrifice it in the evening."*  
Fenton: *"must kill it between the dusks (dawn and twilight)."*

Jew. Pub. Soc.  
(Masoretic text): *"shall kill it at dusk."*  
King James: *"shall kill it in the evening."*  
Lamsa: *"shall kill it at sunset."*  
Moffatt: *"shall kill it between sunset and dark."*  
New English: *"shall slaughter the victim between dusk and dark."*  
Rev. Stand.: *"shall kill their lambs in the evening."*  
Septuagint: *"shall kill it toward evening."*  
Smith: *"shall slaughter it at twilight."*

These renderings fall into two basic groupings: Luther and others followed the literal Hebrew almost exactly, i.e., "*between (the two) evenings*," and did not attempt to explain the meaning. Leeser and others endeavored to interpret the Hebrew and set forth the approximate time which they felt was indicated.

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The Hebrew expression "*between the two evenings*" also occurs in several other passages in the Old Testament. Young's Concordance lists the following texts where it is so used:<sup>4</sup>

Exod.12:6

Lev. 23:5

Exod.16:12

Num. 9:3,5,11

Exod. 29:39,41

Num. 28:4,8

Exod. 30:8

Presently we will review the opinion of various authorities on the meaning of this obscure Hebrew expression. First, however, we want to examine a few of these instances in Scripture where it occurs apart from Exod. 12:6, as we think this will shed some light on its meaning.

Some students of this subject are of the opinion that the literal Hebrew "*between the two evenings*" indicates that the lamb could properly have been slain anytime during the twenty-four hours marking the 14th day of Nisan. We cannot agree with this view, for we believe that a very definite time of sacrifice was being set forth. This becomes evident as we examine some of the Scriptures where this puzzling expression is used.

First, let us turn to Num. 28:3-6 and Exod. 29:39, 41:

***"This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the Lord: two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even [between the two evenings] ... It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in Mt. Sinai for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord." Num. 28:3, 4, 6***

Since the account in Exodus 29 is almost identical, we will not repeat it here.

God's instructions to the Israelites, as evidenced here, were that two daily sacrifices should be prepared, one in the morning and the other "*between the two evenings.*" Notice that in setting forth the time in this manner, a clear delineation is given. Neither sacrifice could be offered at any point during the twenty-four hours of the day, but they were to be kept separate into distinct parts of the day. Since there already was one offering in the morning, "*between the two evenings*" could not have meant a duplication of that sacrifice; clearly, some other time than "morning" was being indicated.

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Young, "Even," "Evening," *Analytical Concordance*, pp. 309, 310.

Slaying the Lamb

But what was meant by "morning" in contrast with the "evening?" In a broad sense, it is possible to divide the twenty-four hour day into equal segments of "morning" and "evening"; in such a usage, morning applies to the daylight hours and evening to the darkness. Since the Jewish day was reckoned as beginning at 6 o'clock in the evening, in such a usage the evening portion would come first and the morning would follow afterward to complete one full day. However, this is not the sense in which "morning" is being used in Numbers 28, nor in the other passages which contrast it with the "evening" ("***between the two evenings***"), during which the paschal lamb was sacrificed. This will become evident as our study progresses.

To further clarify this matter, let us turn to another Scripture whose setting was approximately at the time of the original Passover. It is found in Exodus 16:12-15, and again contains the expression "***between the two evenings***":

***"I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even [between the two evenings] ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost upon the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna [margin, What is this?]: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." Exod. 16:12-15***

Notice that the Israelites were to eat flesh "***between the two evenings***" and that they were to be filled with bread (the miraculous manna) in the morning. But in this interesting passage, it is quite clear what is meant by the "morning," because the phenomenon of nature was used to identify the time of day. The dew which had formed during the night covered the ground in the morning and evaporated as the sun rose. Thus, the time when the dew lay upon the ground and started to lift was considered "morning" and this always occurs in the beginning of the daylight hours. This was the appropriate time to offer the morning sacrifice of Numbers 28. Hence, in these texts we have a restricted usage of the term "morning," showing that the expression could not refer to later hours of the daylight, such as in the afternoon.

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With this realization of the restricted usage of "morning," the application of the expression "***between the two evenings***" begins to clarify. Since the early hours of daylight are now eliminated, only the afternoon and night hours remain for consideration. We believe the foregoing account is also helpful in further narrowing down these possibilities.

From the text in Exodus 16, the details of the gathering and eating of the quail are not made clear. If the quail merely were caused to fall from the sky and thereby covered the camp, conceivably this phenomenon could have happened by night as well as by day. But if the quail flew lower than usual over the camp and gave the Israelites an opportunity to seize them by hand, this would have to have occurred during daylight hours. In any event, the text states that "***at even the quail came up and covered the camp.***" Shortly thereafter, "***between the two evenings,***" they were consumed.

Since there are only a few sketchy accounts of the brief period (30 days) in which the Israelites were permitted to eat quail in their wilderness journeyings (Exod. 16:12-15; Num. 11:18-23, 31-34; Ps. 78:27-31, 105:40), there is some difference of opinion as to whether the quail were a loving provision of Jehovah or a severe test of the obedience of His people. Nevertheless, in either event, the time when the birds were caused to "fall" about the camp would not be affected. A late afternoon time for this occurrence seems particularly appropriate from the following line of reasoning:

Throughout the thirty day period when quail were eaten, the Israelites also gathered and ate manna early in the morning with the rising of the dew. Actually, for the balance of the forty year wandering, the manna as a divinely provided nourishment sufficed for all of the daily meals. But during this brief period when God permitted the quail, the flesh of the birds were used for the second, and apparently final, meal of the day; see Exod. 16:12. Considering the normal process of human digestion and need for spacing of meals, the eating of the quail would logically have taken place late in the afternoon or early evening.

Further support for a late afternoon time being indicated by the expression "***between the two evenings***" comes from the next text of Scripture that uses the phrase:

***"And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it ... and thou shalt overlay it with pure gold ... And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony ... And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even [between the two evenings], he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." Exod. 30:1, 3, 6-8***

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Reference is made here to the Golden Altar which was situated in the Holy compartment of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, just in front of the veil leading into the Most Holy. Upon this altar Aaron, the High Priest, was to burn incense twice daily, first in the morning and again ***"between the two evenings."*** Similar to the morning and evening sacrifice of Numbers 28, it is obvious that the incense was not to be burned at any time during the twenty-four hour day, but that very definite times were being prescribed. The fact that the second instance of burning incense was linked with the lighting of the lamps seems to mark ***"between the two evenings"*** as occurring fairly close, and probably just prior, to dusk and the setting in of darkness. And again, the expression is used in contrast with the "morning."

Thus far, we have collated four Scriptures using the expression ***"between the two evenings,"*** in an effort to clarify what was meant in the original passage under study in Exodus 12:6. These Scriptures were Numbers 28:4, Exodus 29:39,41, Exodus 16:12, and Exodus 30:8. Two other Scriptures also contain the expression in question--Leviticus 23:5 and Numbers 9:3,5,11. However, they will not be considered here since their context does not contribute to an understanding of its usage.

One other text should be examined in this context, as it is very helpful in explaining the timing of the evening sacrifice, which in turn has been linked to ***"between the two evenings"*** by Numbers 28:3,4 as already noted. Its setting is found in Elijah's challenge to the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel:

***"[The false prophets] called on the name of Baal from morning ... until noon ... but there was no voice nor any that answered ... And it came to pass when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer ... And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God ... let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel ..."***  
***1 Kings 18:26-36***

Slaying the Lamb

This passage makes it clear that the time of the evening sacrifice was well past midday; and from the context that follows, down to 1 Kings 19:3, that it was also before darkness set in. It was after the time of the evening sacrifice that the people slew all the prophets of Baal and also that the clouds in the heavens were seen gathering for rain. Necessarily, these events occurred while yet light. Hence a very positive time setting is set forth here--after midday, but before dark.

Tying together now what we have learned from this preliminary Scriptural study, we can summarize our conclusions as follows:

(a) The morning (early hours of light) and night hours appear to have been eliminated as possible applications of "between the two evenings."

(b) This leaves the late afternoon hours as the most plausible time indicated.

In the light of this study, Leeser's consistent representation of "*between the two evenings*" as "*toward evening*" (or toward darkness), such as his translation in Exodus 16:12, surely seems correct. There are very definite and distinct hours being indicated in the Hebrew wording, and not merely vague or indefinite time periods.

Before leaving this section, we might find it helpful to reflect upon the general usage of the word "*evening*" in the Old Testament writings, apart from the more specific "*between the two evenings*," which has now been examined in depth. It is true that the evening introduces the next day from the standpoint of the Jewish custom which begins the day after sunset. However, this is not the general usage of "evening" in the Scriptures. The evening time when mentioned in connection with a given day normally has reference to the close of that same day. For a clear example of this, we need merely turn to Leviticus 23:27, 28, 32:

***"On the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement, a holy convocation shall it be unto you, and ye shall fast; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And no manner of work shall ye do on this same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God ... A sabbath of rest it shall be unto you, and ye shall fast: on the ninth day of the month at evening (shall ye begin), from evening unto evening shall ye celebrate your sabbath."* (Leeser)**

The Day of Atonement has always been considered the holiest of the Jewish feast days or convocations. It was to be kept on the 10th day of the seventh month. But when did this day begin and when did it end? In unmistakable language, the time aspect was set forth: from the 9th day at evening until the 10th day at evening. Thus we have the definite statement that evening of the day designated, such as the tenth day in this instance, has reference to the close of that day.

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With this self-explanatory text as a guide to the general Scriptural usage of "evening," we can now apply this usage to those texts where the meaning is not as readily apparent. Examples of this are found in *Deuteronomy 16:6* and *Joshua 5:10*: "**there shalt thou slay the passover at evening, at the going down of the sun**"..."**they prepared the passover-offering on the 14th day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho.**" (Leeser) According to Young's Concordance as already cited, these are not instances where the literal Hebrew is "**between the two evenings,**" but are merely general usages of the word "evening." With Leviticus 23:32 as our key, it is now evident that the ending of the day is signified in these texts, not the beginning. This is in complete harmony with all the texts examined so far.

We will now continue this investigation by examining the testimony of various authorities upon the question at hand.

***The Testimony of Authorities.*** Let us consider first an interpretation of the traditional Jewish observance, provided by a man who was reared in the Jewish faith. In his views, the writer discusses and endeavors to harmonize the daily morning and evening sacrifices, the timing of the paschal sacrifice, and the custom of reckoning the day from evening to evening:

". . . Having been brought up in the Jewish faith up to the age of 20, I always understood the matter to be thus: The killing of the lamb was on the evening of the fourteenth day, or more correctly speaking, according to the original, BAIN HAARBAYIM, between the evenings, that is, between the sun's declining west and his setting, about three o'clock p.m. For the Jews observe two evenings in each day. The first commences after twelve o'clock at noon, and the second at three o'clock p.m. Between these two evenings the daily evening sacrifice was offered up and immediately after the passover lamb was killed and prepared. But if the passover fell on the weekly Sabbath, i.e., on Friday, they began an hour sooner, that they might despatch their business by the time that the Sabbath began. Hence that day is called the preparation of the passover. John 19:14.

"The Jews computed their days from evening to evening; i.e., from the setting of the sun of one day to the setting again on the next day. This appears to be the command given by Moses, '**From even to even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.**' (Lev. 23:32) Moses, in giving an account of the Creation, says, '**And there was evening and there was morning, one day.**' (Gen. 1:5) By the evening and the morning the Jews understand the same portion of time that we call day and night, or twenty-four hours; the former continued from the rising of the sun until its setting, and from that time till his reappearance was called the night. The division of time into hours was not known in the days of Moses. Compare Gen. 15:12; 18:1; 19:1.



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“The day was again divided into two equal portions: from the rising of the sun until noon was the morning, and after that, until the sun had gone down, was the evening. Hence we read only of morning and evening sacrifices. Again, the morning and the evening were divided each into two equal parts, for the regulation of the morning and evening sacrifices and prayers.

“The morning sacrifice and prayer was allowed to be offered at any time between the rising of the sun and the third hour, i.e., 9 a.m., and the evening sacrifice and prayer may be offered up at any time during the first evening. Hebrew, EREV KATON, the short or lesser evening, i.e., from noon until ninth hour, or 3 p.m.; and from that time until sun setting, is called in the Hebrew EREV GADOL, i.e., the greater evening. It was between these two evenings the paschal lamb was to be slain . . .”<sup>5</sup>

The main features of this view have been simplified in **Exhibit C** which follows, showing that *"between the two evenings"* indicated a fairly exact time of day--about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Gronowsky's impression of the timing of the paschal sacrifice is evidently that of the orthodox Jew brought up under rabbinical training, as passed on from generation to generation. It agrees remarkably with that of the ancient Pharisees, as will be seen in the discussion which follows.

We come now to a survey of the opinions of various authorities, past and present, regarding the meaning of the Hebrew expression *"between the two evenings."* The first two excerpts are taken from standard reference works; one source is Jewish, the other Christian:

"Paschal Lamb, the offering which, according to Exodus 12, was slaughtered by the Israelites at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. According to the story the sacrificial animal, a young male sheep or goat, was ordered by Moses to be set aside on the tenth of Nisan and slaughtered and eaten on the 14th, about evening ...

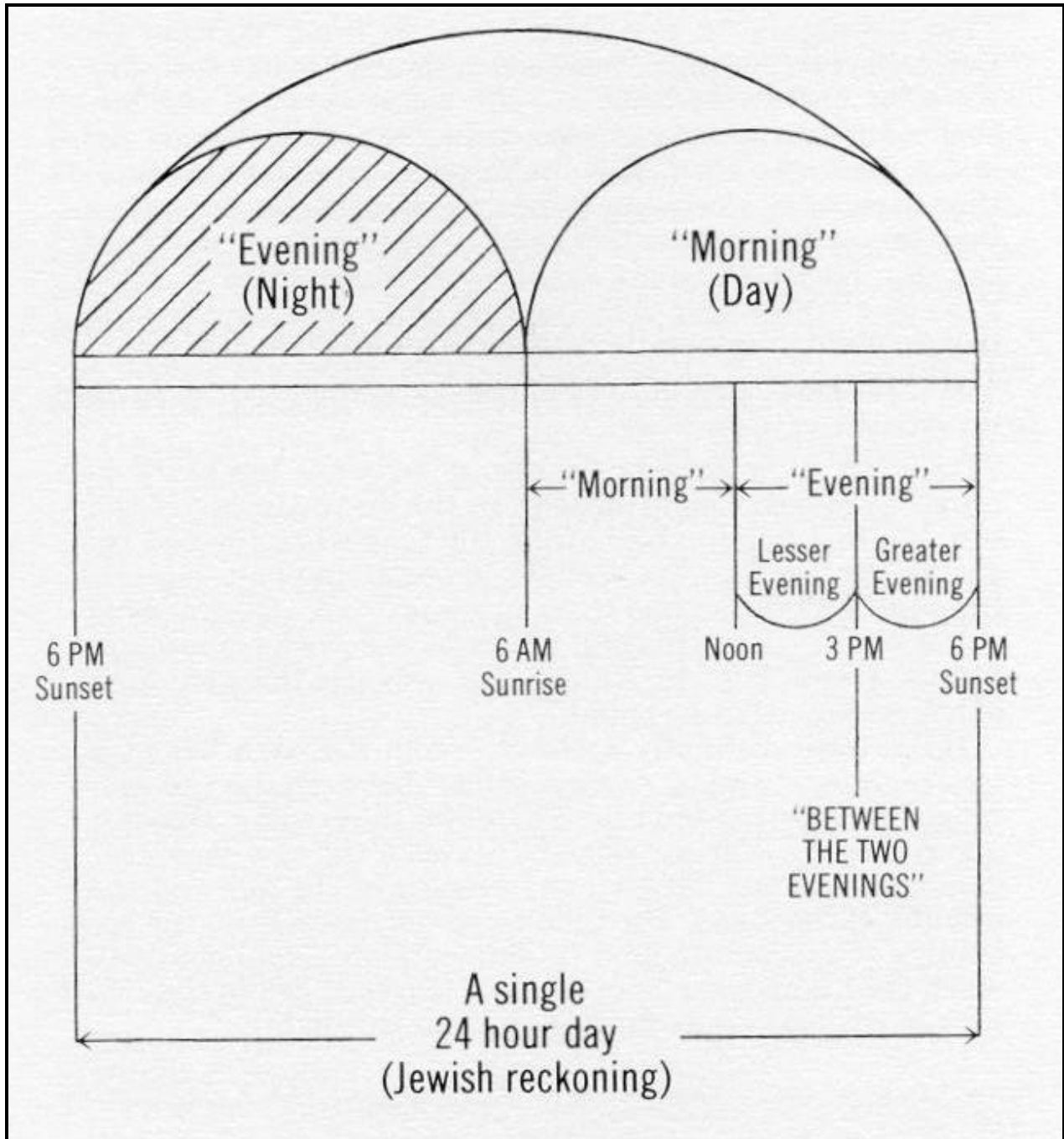
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<sup>5</sup>J. Gronowsky, "Between Evenings--A Jewish View," *Tower Reprints*, (1902), p. 2953.

## EXHIBIT C

### “BETWEEN THE TWO EVENINGS”

(According to J. Gronowsky)



*Slaying the Lamb*

“This story of the first paschal lamb, as related in the Bible, became the pattern for the observance of Passover during the period of the Temple, but with a few modifications. Thus the sacrifice took place in the sanctuary and the blood was sprinkled upon the altar. The Pharisees and Sadducees had a dispute as to the time when the slaughtering should take place; the former held it should be in the last three hours before sunset, the latter, between sunset and nightfall.”<sup>6</sup>

The second source gives a little more detail on the differing points of view among the Jewish religious factions:

"The expression **‘in the evening,’** or **‘at even,’** margin **‘between the two evenings,’** has been variously interpreted. The Karaites and Samaritans ... the space between the setting of the sun and the moment when the stars become visible or darkness sets in. But the Pharisees and Rabbinites ... the space from afternoon (when the sun begins to decline from its vertical or noontide point ...) to the disappearing of the sun. Hence the daily sacrifice might be killed at 12:30 p.m., on a Friday. But as the paschal lamb was slain after the daily sacrifice, it generally took place from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m.”<sup>7</sup>

The traditional view of the Pharisees is elaborated yet further in an exhaustive older work:

"Tradition .. interprets the phrase **‘between the two evenings’** to mean from afternoon to the disappearing of the sun, the first evening being from the time when the sun begins to decline from its vertical or noontide point towards the west; and the second from its going down and vanishing out of sight ... Such faithful followers of Jewish tradition as Saadia, Rashi, Kimchi, Ralbag, etc., espouse this definition of the ancient Jewish canons ...

"Rashi most distinctly declares, ‘From the sixth hour (= twelve o’clock) and upwards is called **“between the two evenings,”** because the sun begins to set for the evening. Hence it appears to me that the phrase **“between the two evenings”** denotes the hours between the evening of the day and the evening of the night. The evening of the day is from the beginning of the seventh hour (= immediately after noontide), when the evening shadows begin to lengthen, while the evening of the night is at the beginning of the night.’ . . .

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<sup>6</sup>Isaac Landman, (ed.), "Paschal Lamb," *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, VIII., 406.

<sup>7</sup>Samuel W. Barnum, (ed. ), "Passover," *Smith's Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 802.

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“Kimchi says almost literally the same thing: ‘(Hebrew.....) ("**Between the two evenings**")', is from the time when the sun begins to incline towards the west, which is from the sixth hour (= twelve o'clock) and upwards. It is called (Hebrew.....) because there are two evenings, for from the time that the sun begins to decline is one evening, and the other evening is after the sun has gone down, and it is the space between which is meant by "**between the two evenings.**" '...'<sup>8</sup>

In analyzing the basic differences between the Pharisees and Samaritans as enumerated above, some have been confused by the Jewish custom of beginning and ending the day in the evening at sunset. In the case of the viewpoint of the Pharisees and Rabbinites, the time aspect is clear: the paschal lamb was slain "in the last three hours before sunset," which would occur toward the closing portion of the Jewish day. But in the case of the view of the Sadducees and Samaritans, there seems to be some room for confusion: If the lamb was slain between sunset and nightfall, should this time be considered as the closing portion of the Jewish day or the beginning of the day, since in this instance it occurred after sunset?

A clear cut answer to this is provided by a modern scholar, Jack Finegan. In his treatise, he brings out the fact that the differences of opinion among the ancient Jewish authorities did not center on whether the lamb was to be slaughtered in the beginning or in the closing portions of the 14th day. Rather, the argument centered on whether the offering was to be made in the afternoon of that day (about 3 p.m. or so) or still later in the very closing portion of the same day. He indicates that these different views are attributed to different methods of counting time: the one ending the day at sunset (about 6 p.m.), the other, when the stars came out and darkness set in. The following lengthy excerpt is quoted from his work for those who have been concerned with this important detail:

"The Mishnah<sup>9</sup> states that the daily evening burnt offering was slaughtered at ... two-thirty o'clock, and offered at . . . three-thirty o'clock. If it was the eve of passover, it was slaughtered (and offered) an hour earlier; if it was the eve of passover and this fell on the eve of a sabbath, that is on a Friday, it was slaughtered at ... twelve-thirty o'clock, and offered at ... one-thirty o'clock; and then the passover offering was slaughtered after that.

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<sup>8</sup>John M'Clintock and James Strong, "Passover," *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, VII., 735.

<sup>9</sup>See page 34.

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“Explaining this procedure the accompanying Gemara<sup>9</sup> states that ‘between the evenings’ means ‘from the time that the sun commences to decline in the west,’ and that the ‘two evenings’ give ‘two and a half hours before and two and a half hours after and one hour for preparation’ of the sacrifice. This means that ‘evening’ begins as soon as the sun passes its midday zenith, and that the ‘two evenings’ are from twelve to two-thirty o’clock, and from three-thirty until six o’clock respectively. Thus the daily evening burnt offering is ordinarily sacrificed in the hour between these two evenings, but when the passover must also be sacrificed the same afternoon then the daily sacrifice is moved ahead.

“In another passage the Mishnah deals with the requirement of Exodus 34:25 that the passover sacrifice not be offered with leaven, and states that everything leavened must be burned at the beginning of the sixth hour, that is at twelve o’clock noon. As the accompanying discussion in the Gemara shows, this indicates that the sacrificing could begin immediately after noon. According to Josephus the passover sacrifices were conducted from the ninth to the eleventh hour, that is from three to five o’clock in the afternoon, and this was presumably the standard practice in the first century A.D.

“According to the foregoing passages, then, the ‘evening’ was substantially equivalent to the entire afternoon. In Deuteronomy 16:6, however, it is said that the passover sacrifice is to be offered ‘in the evening at the going down of the sun.’ The Talmudic explanation of this was that the evening meant the afternoon and was the time when the passover was to be slaughtered, and that the sunset was the time when it was to be eaten. The Sadducees and the Samaritans, however, held that the slaughtering of the lamb itself was to take place between sunset and darkness. The Book of Jubilees seems to agree with this when it says about the passover lamb: ‘It is not permissible to slay it during any period of the light, but during the period bordering on the evening, and let them eat it at the time of the evening until the third part of the night.’ The Targum of Onkelos also rendered ‘**between the two evenings**’ in Exodus 12:6 as ‘between the two suns,’ and this was then explained as meaning the time between sunset and the coming out of the stars.

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<sup>9</sup>The sacred Jewish books may be summarized as follows: The TORAH consists of the first five biblical books which are attributed to Moses. The TALMUD consists of two parts: first, the MISHNA, the traditional doctrines which were transmitted orally and which became a closed canon about the third century; and, second, the GEMARA, a commentary on the Mishna, which elaborated and interpreted it and which was completed about the fifth century. The MIDRASH is composed of a body of popular interpretive literature, ending about 1040 A.D.; it employs legends, poetry, fables, etc., to illuminate the literal text of the Old Testament and to bring out its inner meaning.

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“In either case, however, whether it meant the afternoon time up until sunset, or the time from sunset until the stars became visible, the ‘evening’ in the sense and in the regard just discussed evidently belonged to the closing part of the day, and it was only with the sunset or the appearing of the stars that the next day began.”<sup>10</sup>

Finegan's final conclusions are especially noteworthy, and worth repeating. He indicates that all of the ancient authorities are in agreement that the expression "**between the two evenings**" refers to the closing part of the day. Some of them think it meant during the afternoon hours; the remainder that a still later time was indicated. His grand finale is: "In either case, however ... the ‘evening’ in the sense and in the regard just discussed [**‘between the two evenings’**] evidently belonged to the closing part of the day.”<sup>11</sup>

In concluding this portion, the following additional references are cited, harmonizing with all of the foregoing and showing that the Passover lamb was slain about (or just before) sunset, closing out the 14th day of Nisan. The significance of this fact, as it relates to identifying the Messiah of prophecy, we must leave for later consideration. (In each of the following citations, italics were added for emphasis.):

- (a) "The Passover lamb was killed, in the time of the Second Temple, in the court where all other KODASHIM were slaughtered, in keeping with the Deuteronomic prescription, and it was incumbent upon every man and woman to fulfill this obligation. *The time ‘between the two evenings’ (BEN HA-ARBAYIM) was construed to mean ‘after noon and until nightfall,’* the killing of the lamb following immediately upon that of the TAMID, the burning of the incense, and the setting in order of the lamps, according to daily routine ... After the carcass had been properly prepared, and the blood properly disposed of, it was taken home by its owner and roasted and eaten at eventide.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, pp. 557-558.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Isidore Singer, (ed.), "Passover--in Rabbinical Literature," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, IX., 550-553.

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- (b) *"The animal was slain on the eve of the Passover, on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, after the Tamid sacrifice had been killed, i.e., at three o'clock, or, in case the eve of the Passover fell on Friday, at two."*<sup>13</sup>
- (c) *"The Passover-lamb (a male, and without blemish) was slain at sunset closing the fourteenth day of the month Abib (or, as it was afterwards called, Nisan), and it was then roasted and eaten, no remnant of the flesh being allowed to remain till the following morning ..."*<sup>14</sup>
- (d) *"Passover. A spring festival celebrated by the Jews in commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt by a family feast in the home on the first evening, and by abstaining from leaven during the seven days of the feast ... The Israelites were for all time to eat unleavened bread (Mazzoth) for seven days, as well as keep the sacrifice of the Passover on the eve between the 14th and the 15th of Nisan. This evening meal was not to be attended by any stranger or uncircumcised person ..."*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Singer, (ed.), "Passover Sacrifice," *op. cit.*, IX., 556.

<sup>14</sup>W. M. Clow, (ed.), "Feast of the Passover," *The Bible Reader's Encyclopedia and Concordance*, p. 283.

<sup>15</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Passover," XVII., 358.

### **III. EATING THE LAMB: ON 14TH OR 15TH DAY? ITS RELATION TO FEAST OF PASSOVER**

The account in Exodus 12 highlights the colorful details of the Passover rite. The lamb was to be slain on the 14th day, "between the two evenings" as we have seen. Its blood was to be sprinkled on the side posts of the doors and upon the lintels of all the Jewish homes. The lamb was to be roasted with fire, eaten in the night which followed, and served with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. None was to remain until the morning and if there was too much to be completely consumed, it was to be burned with fire.

This was certainly not to be an ordinary meal, accompanied by the usual interesting family conversation and relaxation of mind and body. No, this meal was to be eaten in haste, with loins girded, shoes on the feet, staff in hand, and perhaps even in a standing position. The unusual manner of eating this meal was occasioned by the fact that this night was to be the Lord's Passover when all the firstborn in the land of Egypt were to be slain -- all, that is, except those who were under the protection of the blood of the lamb.

The severest of the ten plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians -- the death of the firstborn -- was to culminate in the exodus of the entire host of the Israelites. Upon this event the minds of all the participants in the meal were directed. At a moment's notice, they had to be prepared to start their arduous journey and to escape from their taskmasters.

With the lamb slain in the closing portion of the 14th day, darkness set in before the lamb was fully prepared. Exodus 12:8 specifies that it was to be eaten in that same night, which was the beginning of the 15th day. The Jewish custom of beginning each day at sunset (6 p.m.) instead of at midnight would make this possible. But now we must ask ourselves, can this understanding of the time sequence be harmonized with the whole range of Scriptures touching upon the subject? Since there is some difference of opinion on this point, we will need to gather considerable testimony to clarify the issue. This will include commentaries on Jewish belief and practice to be sure that the Jewish tradition is faithfully represented.

*Are the Meal and Feast Synonymous?* Let us begin by noting the fact that some Bible students are under the impression that there were two meals eaten in connection with the Passover: the first is thought to consist of the sacrificial lamb as described in Exodus 12 and eaten on the night of (that is, beginning) the 14th of Nisan; the second, a special festive meal introduced later in Jewish history to commemorate the exodus from Egypt, eaten on the night of (that is, beginning) the 15th of Nisan. This view, of course, does not synchronize with what has been presented thus far, since it was pointed out that all authorities on the subject are agreed that the lamb was slain in the closing part of the 14th day, so that the night which followed in which the meal was eaten was of necessity the beginning of the 15th day. This would signify that there was but one meal of special importance connected with the Passover. However, does the aforementioned view of two prominent meals find a basis in the Scriptures?



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Returning again to the twelfth chapter of Exodus, we notice that the specifications of the Passover meal are given from verse 8 onward: these include the time it was to be eaten ("**in that night**"), the principal elements of the meal, and the manner in which it was to be eaten. Verse 14 is then somewhat of a summation, indicating that the day in which the lamb was eaten and the firstborn spared from the plague of death--that particular day--was to be the one celebrated by a feast throughout all their generations:

***"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." Exod. 12:14***

We think it significant that in this brief summary verse, the importance of the feast of the Passover is primarily linked with the sparing of the firstborn from death (as seen from the context of verses 11-13 which precede it), rather than the actual escape from Egypt. The feast also commemorates the escape, as confirmed in verse 17 and elsewhere, since it was in that same night that the exodus was begun. But the emphasis here is to show that the feast of the Passover was instituted to commemorate the night of the passing over of the houses of the Israelites. Hence the "feast" of the Passover, as the term was being used in verse 14, was connected with the eating of the lamb which took place just prior to this event.

A comparison of the feast of Exodus 12:14 with those feasts enumerated in the Mosaic Law instituted shortly thereafter is now quite enlightening. In Exodus 23, three feasts are mentioned which the Lord required the Israelites to observe during the course of the year: "**Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.**" (Exod. 23:14) (Notice the similarity to Exodus 12:14: "**Ye shall keep [this day] a feast to the Lord throughout your generations.**") Since it was the express commandment of the Lord that the Passover feast be celebrated as a perpetual memorial, we would expect it to be mentioned in this listing. And indeed it is, with its proper name clearly spelled out!

The three feasts which were to be observed unto the Lord were: "**the feast of unleavened bread,**" "**the feast of harvest,**" and "**the feast of ingathering.**" In relation to the Passover, there is only one feast mentioned, the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

***"Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt ... )" Exod. 23:15***

Other Scriptures, such as Leviticus 23:6, supply the additional information that this feast was to be celebrated on the 15th day.

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If there were two separate meals in connection with the Passover, each of which had been enjoined as perpetual celebrations unto the Lord, (one on the 14th and one on the 15th) we would expect that both should have appeared in the listing of Exodus 23. The reason for this is simply that the text in Exodus 23 is introduced, as already shown, by the declaration that the three feasts to follow were the special ones to be kept by God's covenant people. Yet there is only one feast mentioned in connection with the Passover activity—**“the feast of unleavened bread.”** Surely the Lord did not alter His requirement in Exodus 12:14, where the feast consisted of eating the paschal lamb. The fact that only one feast is mentioned in the Exodus 23 listing seems to be strong evidence that there was only one special meal related to the Passover.

Some who have studied this matter differ from this conclusion because they believe that the occasion of the eating of the lamb was considered a sacrificial meal and not a feast at all; as such, they think the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a separate meal introduced on the 15th day. Such reasoning appears quite plausible until all the related facts are brought to bear on the question. In regard to Exodus 12:14, just considered, it necessitates ignoring the context of the verses preceding it and assuming that the feast mentioned there did not pertain to the eating of the lamb, but was instead the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

To assist those holding the foregoing view, we now would like to turn to another Scripture whose expression is so clear that it cannot be misunderstood. It is found in Exodus 34:25 and reads as follows:

***"Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning."***

This is a clear reference to the eating of the paschal lamb and a reminder of the original instructions of the Lord:

***"And ye shall let nothing of it [the roasted flesh of the lamb] remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire."  
Exod. 12:10***

The paschal lamb is here described as "the sacrifice of the feast of the passover"; that is to say, the lamb which was slain, roasted and eaten by the households of Israel and which formed the main item of the Passover meal. Unmistakably, the Passover meal is described as a feast, the feast of Passover. The fact that the sacrifice of this feast was not to be left until the morning is another positive identification of it with the paschal lamb. There is just no mistaking the import of this passage in Exodus 34:25: plainly, the original Passover meal is Scripturally regarded as a feast.

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Incidentally, it is the same Hebrew word CHAG, defined as "festival," which is translated "feast" in Exodus 12:14, Exodus 34:25, and in those texts describing the Feast of Unleavened Bread:<sup>1</sup>

**Exod. 12:14** *"ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord...."*

**Exod. 34:25** *"the sacrifice of the feast of the passover . . ."*

**Lev. 23:6** *"On the fifteenth day ... is the feast of unleavened bread . . ."*

We trust that the groundwork has now been laid to establish that the original Passover meal and the sparing of the firstborn which it memorialized in part, both took place on the 15th day of Nisan. As this study continues, we will see how other Scriptures harmonize with this portrayal and concur that the occasion of eating the lamb was indeed the Feast of Passover, i.e., the beginning of the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commenced on the 15th day.

***In Jewish Tradition.*** Before proceeding with the Scriptural study of this subject, we would like to examine other sources which describe the Passover observance as it was carried out in actual practice through the course of Jewish history. We particularly want to note whether there was only one special Passover meal which followed the slaying of the lamb, or whether there were two, and any information regarding the timing of these events.

- (a) "Passover: The lamb itself ... was required to be eaten quickly, with girded loins, staff in hand, and shoes on the feet. Later, this regulation was considered to refer only to the first Passover; but the Samaritans observe the usage at the present day ... *This sacrificial meal was the beginning of the seven day festival of unleavened bread.* From the 15th to the 21st day, to eat anything leavened was forbidden under penalty of being cut off from the community."<sup>2</sup>
  
- (b) "Haggadah, Passover: Ritual recited in the home on the first Passover evening ... *Originally the narration (i.e., HAGGADAH, cf. Exod. 13:8) of the story of the Exodus by the father to his children accompanied the meal of the paschal lamb on Nisan 15.* After the cessation of sacrifice, the only aspect of the meal still valid was the partaking of unleavened bread, while the eating of bitter herbs was observed as a rabbinical commandment.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Young, "Feast," *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel M. Jackson, (ed.), "Passover," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, VIII., 369-370.

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“The rabbis defined this as a festive meal, therefore requiring the drinking of four cups of wine (interpreted symbolically by later generations), and the recitation of HALLEL [Heb., ‘praise,’ referring to Psalms 113-118 in liturgical use]. They also introduced the reading of Deut. 26:5-9 with its Midrash. Other additions included four questions asked by the youngest present and the explanation of the distinguishing foods of the evening. The order (Seder) of the ritual developed into established custom, and the HAGGADAH already approximated its present form by the close of the Talmudic Period.”<sup>3</sup>

- (c)“Passover Sacrifice: *The animal was slain on the eve of the Passover, on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, after the Tamid sacrifice had been killed, i.e., at three o'clock, or, in case the eve of the Passover fell on Friday, at two. The killing took place in the court of the Temple, and might be performed by a layman, although the blood had to be caught by a priest ...*

*“[In] the evening ... they took their lambs home and roasted them on a spit of pomegranate-wood. No bones might be broken either during the cooking or during the eating. The lamb was set on the table at the evening banquet (see SEDER) and was eaten by the assembled company ... The sacrifice had to be consumed entirely that same evening, nothing being allowed to remain overnight.”*<sup>4</sup>

- (d)“Passover, the holiday of Passover, is the feast of unleavened bread which is called in Hebrew CHAG HAMATZOS, or in common term Passover (the holiday of Passover) ... The holiday of Passover was always celebrated on the 15th day of Nisan.”<sup>5</sup>

[Italics in these citations added for emphasis.]

From these excerpts, we are led to believe that the Jews were very consistent and reverential in their observance of the time features of the Passover. Only one special meal was held after the slaying of the lamb. This was in reality the feast occurring on the beginning of the 15th day of Nisan, during the early night. As seen from the descriptions, the exact form of the ritual has changed since the original institution of the Passover and especially since the destruction of the Temple. But apparently there has not been any variation in the timing of the sacrificial meal which took place on the 15th day.

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<sup>3</sup> Cecil Roth, (ed.), "Haggadah, Passover," *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 815-816.

<sup>4</sup>Isidore Singer, (ed.), "Passover Sacrifice," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, IX., 556.

<sup>5</sup>Letter from Rabbi Solomon Poll, Congregation Ahavath Israel, Trenton, N.J., Feb.17, 1956.

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Not only was there no other meal or feast in commemoration of the sparing of the firstborn, as some have postulated to have occurred on the 14th day, but the very opposite-- a fast--was attached to this day in Jewish tradition:

"The Fast of the First-Born, in commemoration of the escape of the Hebrew first-born in Egypt, occurs on the 14th of Nisan. The chief of the household may take the place of the minor son, or fast voluntarily in case there be none in the family subject to the obligation."<sup>6</sup>

In studying the Old Testament Scriptures, we cannot help but be impressed with the fixed requirements of Jehovah God as expressed in His law to the Israelites. The Mosaic Law is permeated with "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Almost every aspect of life and man's relationship to others is touched upon and regulated by specific rules. In matters of religious observance, the timing was considered especially important. The exactness of the requirements and the submission of the Israelites to them were designed by the Lord to be for their own blessing and general welfare and proved to be such whenever they were heeded. In addition, as we will endeavor to show later, they served as types and shadows of things far greater than the original ceremony itself.

The history of the Israelites reveals a picture of a people kept separate from surrounding nations because of deep religious fervor and belief in the one true God. Though interspersed also with descriptions of shortcomings and failings which are characteristic of all human beings, this history is one which records the valiant efforts of the Jews to retain the purity of the original religious traditions of their fathers. This is demonstrated today in the survival of the orthodox branch of Jewry which continues to reverence the Torah and the Talmud.

We believe it significant that Jews the world over have been faithful in the celebration of the Passover through the centuries. As shown in the earlier references, as far as is known, the eating of the sacrificial lamb was always carried out on the 15th of Nisan. This was the consistent interpretation of Exodus 12:14, holding this day as the memorial of the sparing of the firstborn, and keeping it a feast unto the Lord throughout their generations. Judging from the zeal by which the Jew is known to have maintained his tradition and in view of his acknowledged scholastic competence, it is difficult for us to see how any view that does not square with this tradition can be a tenable one.

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<sup>6</sup>Singer, *op. cit.*, "Passover--in Rabbinical Literature," p. 553.

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**Further Scriptural Testimony.** There are several lines of reasoning based upon the Scriptures which indicate that the evening in which the paschal lamb was eaten was in reality the start of the 15th day of Nisan. We have already pursued the approach which showed that the original Passover meal was termed a "feast," and that it was synonymous with the start of the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Now let us continue by examining some of the key texts which describe in detail the activities of the 14th and 15th days of Passover:

***"In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein ... [and] in the seventh day is an holy convocation. . ."*** Lev. 23:5-8

***"In the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein ... And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation..."*** Num. 28:16-18,25

Very clearly, these texts indicate that the feast of unleavened bread occurred on the 15th day. But the activity on the 14th day is somewhat beclouded by the expression that it was "the Lord's passover." We have already seen that the term "Passover" is a general one which Scripturally can apply to the 14th day, the 15th, or the entire week's festivity; hence, its use here is not especially revealing in describing the nature of the activity on the 14th day.

Let us turn to Isaac Leeser's version of these same passages.<sup>7</sup> Here is given a clear cut description of what transpired on the 14th day:

***"On the fourteenth day of the first month, toward evening, is the passover-lamb to be offered unto the Lord. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord..."*** Lev. 23:5-6

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<sup>7</sup>Leeser's Old Testament is "carefully translated after the best Jewish authorities" and is published by the Hebrew Publishing Company of New York.

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***"And in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, the passover-lamb (must be offered) unto the Lord. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten..." Num. 28:16-17***

We believe these passages from Leeser serve to clarify the matter quite nicely. The only activity mentioned for the 14th day is the offering of the passover-lamb unto the Lord, toward the evening hour. Then follows the feast of this lamb in the ensuing night, which begins the 15th day of Nisan, according to the Jewish reckoning from sunset to sunset. Hence, it is the sacrifice of the lamb that occurs on the 14th, and the feast of the lamb (also called the "Feast of Unleavened Bread") that takes place on the 15th. This is the sequence which can be used successfully to harmonize the various Bible texts relating to the celebration of the Passover.

Next, let us look at some general expressions pertaining to the Passover which are found in the King James and other translations. We believe that these have proved somewhat misleading in their implications of the nature of the events occurring on the 14th day. From the expression "**they kept the Passover**," as frequently used in the authorized version, the reader could easily conclude that many events transpired on this day: It almost suggests that the killing of the lamb, the eating of the lamb, and the original passing over of the death angel all occurred then--on the 14th. But let us note carefully in analyzing these texts, that it would not be necessary for anything more than the actual slaying of the lamb to have taken place on this day.

**Exhibit D** which follows offers a comparison of translations for some representative texts using the expression "**they kept the Passover**." Incidentally, the word "kept" in the King James is from the Hebrew ASAH, defined as "to do, to perform."<sup>8</sup> This in itself is evidently not significant, since elsewhere it is used to describe either the slaying of the lamb or the partaking of the feast and hence does not distinguish between the two. Leeser, however, does draw a distinction, by consistently representing the phrase "**kept the Passover**" as "**prepared the passover-offering**" (or "**passover-sacrifice**," etc.), as shown in the following table:

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<sup>8</sup>Young, "Keep," *op. cit.*, p. 560

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**EXHIBIT D**  
**“THEY KEPT THE PASSOVER” --**  
**Comparative Translations of Representative Texts**

	<b>King James</b>	<b>Leeser</b>
Num. 9:4-5	"they kept the passover on the 14th day."	"they prepared the passover-lamb on the 14th day." (Septuagint: "[they] sacrifice[d] the Passover.")
Josh. 5:10	"[they] kept the passover on the 14th day."	"they prepared the passover-offering on the 14th day."
2 Chron. 35:17	"[they] kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days."	"[they] prepared the passover-sacrifice at that time, and (kept) the feast of unleavened bread seven days."
Ezra 6:19, 22	"[they] kept the passover upon the 14th day ... and (they) kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy."	"[they] prepared the passover-(sacrifice) on the 14th day... and they celebrated the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy."

The justification for Leeser's more exact rendering is not directly given in his work. However, the use of the word "passover" in the last Scripture cited, Ezra 6:19-22, offers ample substantiation for it:

*"And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel ... and all such as had separated themselves unto them ... did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy."*



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Leeser's version reads:

*"And the children of the exile prepared the passover-(sacrifice) on the fourteenth day of the first month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves, as one man were all of them clean; and they slaughtered the passover-sacrifice for all the children of the exile, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And then did the children of Israel ... and all such as had separated themselves unto them ... eat thereof. And they celebrated the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy."*

Notice that the King James Version of Ezra 6:20, "**(The priests and Levites) killed the passover for all the children of the captivity,**" indicates clearly the necessity for adding the word "sacrifice" after the term "passover." (It was not the passover that was slain; rather, the passover-sacrifice.) Hence, the many references to "keeping the passover on the 14th day" should likewise be translated, "keeping (or preparing) the passover-sacrifice on the 14th day." Thus seen, the expression excludes the eating of the sacrifice, which followed as a separate activity after sunset on the beginning of the 15th day. In the text under consideration, the exact time for the meal is not stated, other than relating it to the feast of unleavened bread (which began on the 15th day.)

One other text using the phrase "keep the Passover" should be considered in somewhat greater detail because it seems to contradict all that has been said thus far. It explains a provision for "keeping" the Passover on the 14th day of the "second month" for those who were ceremonially unclean and unable to participate at the correct time. The King James Version reads:

*"If any man of you ... shall be unclean ... yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, AND eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it." Num. 9:10-12*

The first impression gained from a surface reading of this Scripture is that both the slaying and eating of the lamb were to take place on the 14th day. But a careful rereading and some reflection show that this is not the case. First, let us read the passage again from the Leeser Version:

*"If any man whatever should be unclean ... yet shall he prepare the passover-lamb unto the Lord; In the second month on the fourteenth day toward evening shall they prepare it, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs shall they eat it. They shall leave none of it until morning, and no bone shall they break on it: according to the whole ordinance of the passover-lamb shall they prepare it." Num. 9:10-12 (Leeser)*

Eating the Lamb

Notice that in Leeser's rendering, the conjunction "and" in verse 11, connecting the eating of the lamb with the previous preparation of it on the 14th day, has been omitted. The word "and" is likewise omitted by the Septuagint, the Jewish Publication Society Version, the American Standard Version, Rotherham and others concerned with a literal rendering. Thus seen, the "14th day" in this text evidently is applicable only to the slaying and preparation of the lamb; the eating occurred at some later, unspecified time.

In harmony with this, we recall that neither punctuation nor verse separation is found in the Hebrew manuscripts. Hence, the context of the passage indicates that the eating of the lamb at the end of verse 11 is more appropriately linked with the instructions of verse 12 that none of it was to be left until the morning. This would then impart the correct thought: that the preparation took place on the 14th day, toward evening, and that the eating of the lamb occurred in the hours that followed (on the beginning of the 15th day.)

Such a rearrangement of the passage, with essentially only a change in the use of punctuation, would appear as follows:

***"If any man whatever should be unclean ... yet shall he prepare the passover-lamb unto the Lord; in the second month on the 14th day toward evening shall they prepare it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, leaving none of it until morning, and no bone shall they break on it. According to the whole ordinance of the passover-lamb shall they prepare it." Num. 9:10-12 (revised punctuation)***

Thus seen, Numbers 9:11 cannot properly be construed to teach that the eating was carried out on the 14th day. A thoughtful consideration of the text shows that it is in complete harmony with the account of the original Passover ceremony and with the Scriptural time sequence that has been demonstrated.

To summarize, we have found that it is indeed a plausible thesis to believe that the lamb was slain toward the close of the 14th day of Nisan and eaten during the night hours which followed. The clearest statements of Jewish tradition, those concerned with the exact time features involved, have borne this out. Even more important, it is possible to strike a harmonious testimony from the Old Testament Scriptures, showing two important things:

First, that there was only one special meal eaten in connection with the Passover, that which involved the eating of the lamb itself, and which Scripturally was termed the "feast." And second, that this meal was specified to be kept as an ordinance forever, to be observed at the (beginning of the) 15th day of Nisan.

## **IV. STARTING THE EXODUS: IMMEDIATELY AFTER PASSING OF DEATH ANGEL OR A ONE DAY DELAY?**

Thus far we have dealt with the timing of the slaying and eating of the Passover lamb and related matters. We have discussed the prevailing viewpoints of Bible students and pointed out the position most strongly indicated by the Scriptural evidence and the Jewish tradition. Now temporarily we wish to lay aside the conclusions already drawn in order to view this matter from still another aspect. To facilitate this, we have prepared **Exhibit E** entitled, "Timing of the Passover and the Exodus," which summarizes the two main points of view which have developed.

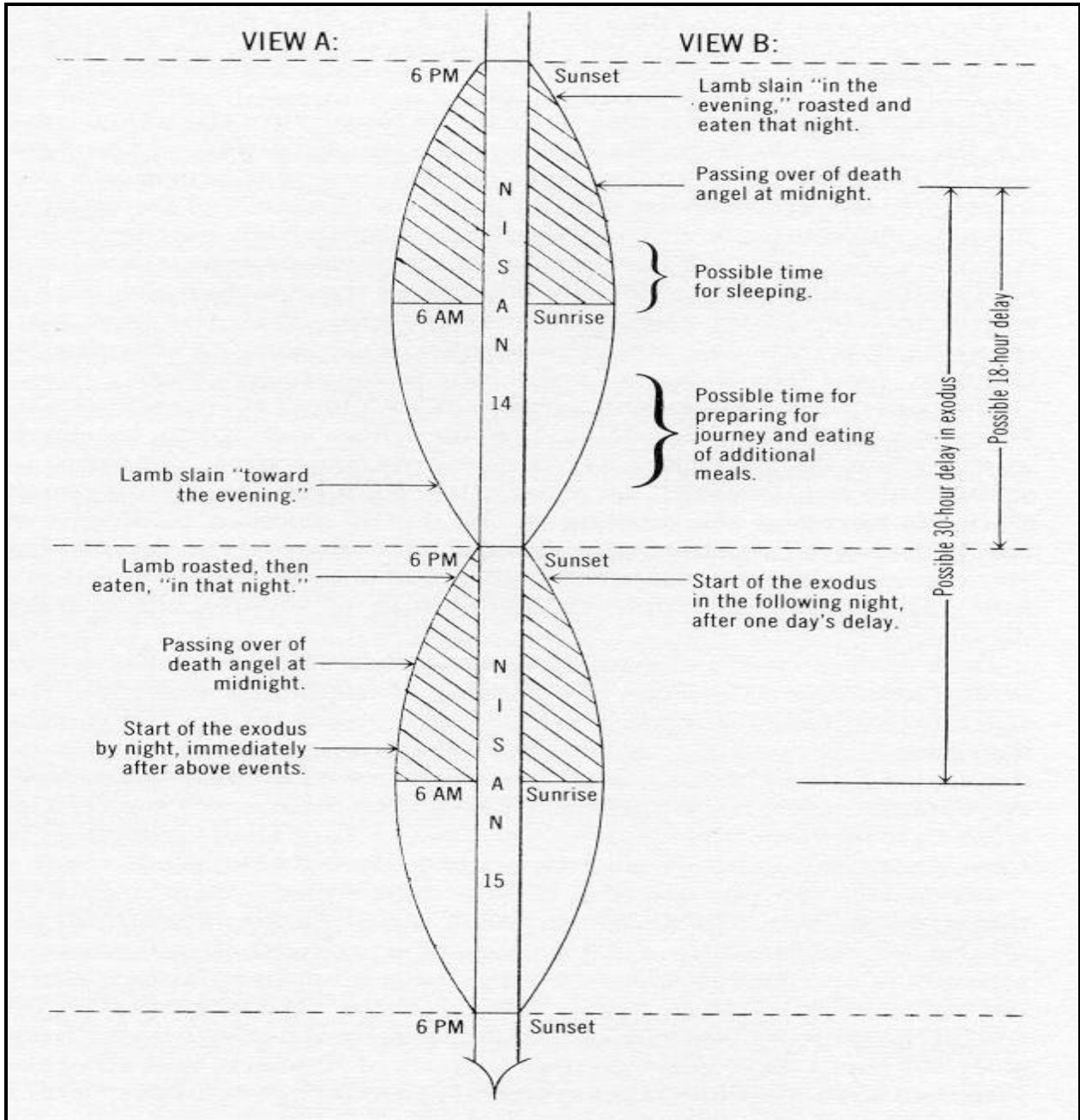
*Timing of the Passover and the Exodus.* View "A" on the chart (**Exhibit E**) depicts the lamb as having been slain toward the close of the 14th day, the lamb eaten in the beginning of the 15th, the passing over of the death angel at midnight, and the exodus as having commenced immediately after these events. View "B" depicts the lamb as having been slain in the beginning of the 14th day, the lamb eaten shortly thereafter, and the passing over of the death angel at midnight, all on the 14th day. The start of the exodus, according to this last view, must have been delayed about 18 hours, to remain in harmony with a Scriptural delineation given in Numbers 33:3, which we will now examine.

By applying this text (Num. 33:3) to our study, we have opened for us an entirely new Scriptural criterion for judging the exact order of events on the 14th and 15th days of Nisan. Here are the verses which are of particular importance:

*"These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went forth out of the land of Egypt according to their armies, under the guidance of Moses and Aaron. And Moses wrote their departures according to their journeys by the order of the Lord; and these are their journeys according to their departures. And they set forward from Rameses in the first month; on the 15th day of the first month, on the morrow after the passover-sacrifice the children of Israel went out with a high hand before the eyes of all the Egyptians. And the Egyptians were burying all the first born, whom the Lord had smitten among them." Num. 33:1-4 (Leeser) [Plain Italics added for emphasis.]*

# EXHIBIT E

## TIMING OF THE PASSOVER AND THE EXODUS A Comparison of Views



Starting the Exodus

The key phrase of interest to us is the one giving the exact time for the departure from Rameses: "***On the 15th day of the first month [Nisan], on the morrow after the passover-sacrifice.***" Let us refer to the chart to determine just how the start of the exodus fits into the sequence of the Passover events which just preceded it. Under View "A," we see how the start of the exodus could have followed immediately after the passing of the death angel, which would satisfy the two requirements of Num. 33:3: the first, pinpointing the 15th day; and the second, enumerating this day as the next one ("the morrow") after the passover-sacrifice.

But now let us apply the same test to View "B" on the chart. Numbers 33:3 specifies that the Israelites set forth on their journey "***on the morrow after the passover-sacrifice.***" In order to satisfy this requirement, we must allow for a time lapse of at least 18 hours between the passing of the death angel at midnight of the 14th day to the beginning of the 15th day, when the exodus commenced. As we analyze the implications of this, we will see how unlikely it was that this schedule of events could have occurred.

***Is A Delay in the Exodus Reasonable?*** If indeed there was such a long delay between the passing of the death angel and the start of the exodus, what events might have transpired during this time? We would suggest that sleeping, eating of additional meals, and preparation for journeying would all have occurred. All of these must have had their place if an entire day's activities were to intervene. Let us consider now each of these activities in turn, to see if it is likely that they actually did take place.

(a) **Sleeping:** The passing of the death angel and the aftermath of the Passover activities was a time of high excitement for all the Israelites. In the anticipation of starting their momentous journey out of Egypt, they could hardly have been able to sleep the remainder of that night. Yet, if View "B" is correct, they would have been obliged to get some rest, or otherwise be without sleep for three days and two nights (part of the 13th, and all of the 14th and 15th of Nisan) consecutively, until their first rest which presumably occurred on the night of the 16th in their encampment at Succoth. See Num. 33:5.

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(b) **Eating:** The last meal mentioned in the Scriptural account of the start of the exodus was the Passover meal and the roasted lamb. If View "B" is correct, about 20 hours would have elapsed from the close of this meal to the time the exodus was begun. It is doubtful that the Israelites could have endured this time without eating additional meals to strengthen them for the rigors of such a journey. How much more reasonable to believe that the Passover meal was indeed the final meal and that the exodus was begun immediately after the passing of the death angel!

The next meal that is mentioned in the Scriptures did not take place until the Israelites had arrived in Succoth (near the Red Sea) after embarking from Rameses:

*"And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, beside children. And a mixed multitude also went up with them; and flocks, and herds, a very large amount of cattle. And they baked of the dough, which they had brought forth out of Egypt, unleavened cakes, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared any provisions for themselves." Exod. 12:37-39 (Leeser)*

By the time this meal was prepared, the exodus was already well underway, and the memorable crossing of the Red Sea was drawing near. See Num. 33:5-8.

(c) **Preparing for the exodus:** The exodus was certainly not a "hit or miss" affair; it had been carefully planned in advance according to God's instructions to Moses. Every detail had to be worked out ahead of time to make it possible for such a large company--an entire nation of men, women and children with their animals and possessions--to move out smoothly. We believe the passing of the death angel and Pharaoh's command for the Israelites to leave triggered the actual start of the exodus, not merely the formulation of plans and last minute preparations.

All of this, it seems to us, adds up to the gross unreasonableness of View "B," which requires delaying the exodus for at least 18 hours after the passing of the death angel. This suggests to our minds that View "A" is the correct one, since it harmonizes fully with Numbers 33:3 and presents no formidable difficulties. In addition, several Scriptures seem to indicate that there was no delay in the start of the exodus and that it did take place immediately after midnight on the 15th day:

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***"And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that was to sit on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not someone dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Eternal, as ye have spoken. Also your flocks and your herds take, as ye have spoken, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, to make haste to send them away out of the land; for they said, We are all dying." Exod. 12:29-33 (Leeser)***

The sudden slaying of all the Egyptian firstborn, both of man and animals, marked the culmination of the ten plagues from the Lord which were designed to persuade Pharaoh to release His people. It was a calamity of the greatest proportion, for there was not one house where someone had not perished. The Egyptians were both overwhelmed with grief and concerned over the possibility of further harm. Pharaoh was so alarmed that he called for Moses immediately, while yet night, and pleaded with him that he rise up with all the Israelites and leave the country at once. His anxious words were, ***"Go, serve the Eternal ... both ye and the children of Israel ... also your flocks and your herds take ... and be gone."*** The note of urgency was amplified by the Egyptian people, who ***"were urgent upon the [Israelites] to make haste to send them away out of the land; for they said, We are all dying."***

In Num. 16:1 we are informed that ***"in the month of Abib [or Nisan] did the Lord thy God bring thee [the Israelites] forth out of Egypt by night."*** This agrees with the account of Exodus 12:41,42, which emphasizes that the Israelites made good their escape from Egypt during the night:

***"And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, and it happened even on the selfsame day, that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. A night to be observed was this unto the Lord to bring them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night holy to the Lord, to be observed by all the children of Israel in their generations." Exod. 12:41,42 (Leeser)***

The "night" in these passages no doubt establishes the time of the very start of the exodus, which probably began between the midnight hour and dawn. With more than a million Israelites

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taking part, seemingly most of the first leg of the exodus--the journey to Succoth--occurred during the ensuing daylight hours.

Another evidence that the exodus began shortly after midnight is contained in the original account of the Passover meal which revealed the manner in which it was to be eaten: "**Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste . . .**" (Exod. 12:11, Leeser) These instructions show that an immediate journey was anticipated and imply that this was the final meal eaten before beginning the journey. This appears quite reasonable, since the preceding weeks had been marked with the earlier plagues against Egypt, all of which were designed to free the Israelites from their bondage. At a moment's notice, therefore, they had to be prepared to leave.

**Consideration of Supposed Difficulties.** We would like to examine several statements in the Scriptures which some have felt favored the thought of a short delay in the exodus. We intend to show that there is no real difficulty in harmonizing them with the foregoing presentation, which characterized the departure as taking place immediately after the passing of the death angel on the night (or beginning) of the 15th day.

The first objection is based upon Exodus 12:22, "**And none of you shall go out from the door of his house until the morning.**" If "morning" of this passage is taken to mean daylight, there would indeed have been a slight delay, anyway, in the departure time. However, such an interpretation is in conflict with other Scriptures already cited--Numbers 16:1 and Exodus 12:41,42--which show that the exodus actually began in the darkness of the night. As we will see presently, a daylight interpretation here is actually more difficult to harmonize with View "B" than it is with View "A." But let us reflect upon this text and endeavor to relate it with other known Passover activities.

First, we notice what this Scripture does not say: It does not specifically say that the Israelites were restricted to their homes until the daylight hours of the morning; it merely specifies "**until the morning.**" The thought evidently is that they were to stay within the protection of the blood-sprinkled doorway until after the death angel had passed by. Since this occurred about midnight (Exod. 12:29) it was safe to leave the houses anytime after that, even when still dark. The "morning" requirement could be satisfied from the standpoint of a midnight to midnight reckoning of the day, which might have been used jointly with the Jewish reckoning.



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In agreement with this, we have the statement in Exodus 12:31 that Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh by night; this probably was shortly after midnight, in the morning. And as already mentioned, other texts clearly portray the exodus as occurring at night, meaning probably that it began while yet dark. If the "morning" of Exodus 12:22 is interpreted as meaning "daylight on the 15th," it would extend the necessary delay in the start of the exodus according to View "B" to a full 30 hours after the passing of the death angel (see Exhibit E), which certainly appears most unlikely.

A second objection is based upon Exodus 12:35,36: ***"And the children of Israel ... had asked of the Egyptians vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments. And the Lord had given the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that they gave unto them what they required; and they emptied Egypt."*** The thought is advanced that it would have taken considerable time to accomplish this receiving of goods from the Egyptians, necessitating a slight delay in the exodus.

We would like to point out first that the text uses the past tense, showing that the request for gold, etc., had already been conveyed on an earlier occasion; the Israelites ***"had asked of the Egyptians vessels of silver,"*** etc. This is verified by the account in Exodus 11:1-3, showing that the Lord instructed Moses to do this even before the final plague came upon Egypt: ***"Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold."*** Thus, this was not a last-minute procedure, and no doubt most of the gifts had already been received by the time of the passing of the death angel.

The killing of the firstborn must have been a paralyzing blow, coming as the climax of the various plagues that preceded it. The Scripture states that there was ***"a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, the like of which hath never been, and the like of which will not be any more."*** (Exod. 11:6) Under this extreme emotional stress, the Egyptians were glad to do anything to get rid of the Israelites. If any had not yet given their gifts of gold and silver, they would surely have done so now and perhaps even urged the Israelites to accept them, if they would only take their leave of the land. Consequently, we think that there was no time wasted in receiving the goods, for the simple reason that the urgency of the Egyptians would not have permitted it.

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Just in passing, we would suggest here that the spoiling of the Egyptians was evidently God's way of squaring the accounts against the injustices and hardships which the Egyptians had inflicted upon the children of Israel during their long period of captivity in that land.

A third objection is based upon Numbers 33:3-4: "***On the morrow after the passover-sacrifice, the children of Israel went out with a high hand before the eyes of all the Egyptians. And the Egyptians were burying all the first-born, whom the Lord had smitten among them.***" Here it is supposed that the Israelites were detained to assist in the work of burying the Egyptian dead, since they had been used as the slaves and lowest workers in the land.

But let us note that the Scripture does not state this, nor does it even imply that the Israelites were forced to assist in the burial in any way. In the Lord's providence, the activity of burying their dead kept the Egyptians occupied while the children of Israel were making their momentous exodus from the land and their escape from their taskmasters.

The fact that the burial proceedings were in progress and that the Israelite hosts were seen by "***the eyes of all the Egyptians***" suggest that daylight had commenced by the time this stage of the departure had been reached. The preliminaries of organizing the bands of people and animals undoubtedly had been completed during the preceding hours of darkness.

In summarizing this portion, we would like to recall a Scripture already quoted, in Exodus 12:39. Despite all that the children of Israel had to accomplish in their exodus from Egypt, the keynote of the activities was found in using haste to make good their escape. On many earlier occasions Pharaoh had changed his mind in granting the Israelites official permission to go. Therefore, when the signal to leave was given by Moses, everyone had to be prepared to move. The Scriptural declaration is that the Israelites "***were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry.***" Any delay at this point could have proved disastrous. Thus we believe that the Israelites did not tarry and started to take their leave "by night" and "in the morning," soon after the death angel had completed his work.

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Let us note how the timing of the exodus as just outlined corroborates in every detail our earlier conclusions regarding the slaying of the lamb and the celebration of the feast. As shown in **Exhibit E** under View "A," we now have a sequence of events which follows in orderly, reasonable fashion and which harmonizes fully with both the Scriptural facts and the evidence of tradition.

## **PART TWO --**

### **FOCUSING ON THE MESSIAH**

#### **V. FULFILLING THE TYPE: THE CLAIMS OF VARIOUS MESSIAHS CONSIDERED.**

We trust that the complexity of detail regarding the Passover and related events, as enumerated in the foregoing pages, has not dimmed the main purpose to which all this has been leading--a consideration of a possible antitypical fulfillment. Students of the Bible are aware of the various methods employed by the Divine Author to set forth eternal truths: allegories, symbolisms, parables, dark sayings, types and shadows. All these have their share in making the Bible the unique and fascinating work which it is. And thus it is that the Passover, as a typical picture of things to come, has its own special contribution to make.

More than being merely a passing historical event or a recurring ceremony of interest to the Jew, the Passover relates in a direct way to the central theme of the Bible. Man's present unhappy, undone condition, his alienation from the Creator and his need for deliverance from the shackles of sin and death are all shown therein. More important, the Passover arrangement identifies for us both the means for achieving this salvation and the individual whom God will honor to bring it to pass. And it is precisely here that the tie-in with the concept of Messiah takes place.

It has been said that of all the religious beliefs and preoccupations of the Jews throughout their history, the Messianic vision was the one that imprinted itself most strongly upon the Jewish mind and character. The national troubles and persecutions which seemed to beset Israel almost continually served but to quicken the fervor of Messianism. The country's strategic geographical location as the land corridor serving three continents attracted the interest of all the ancient world powers and made the Jews prime targets for subjugation and oppression. Unable to resist the onslaught of such powerful enemies as Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Syria, and Rome, the Jewish people could only take consolation in the writings of their own prophets and sages who spoke of a time when God's Messenger in the person of the Messiah would usher in universal peace, righteousness, and justice.

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Earlier we noted how the prophet Isaiah (in chapter 53 of his book) foretold many of the distinguishing characteristics of the Holy One of God who was destined to offer his life as a redemptive sacrifice for the human race. But many Jews who have read this account have failed in their thinking to link this suffering servant with the Messiah of promise, for they were totally unprepared for the concept of suffering and death as a preliminary aspect of Messiah's work. They were looking only for a mighty deliverer who would successfully throw off the yoke of the oppressor. Here again is where the Passover picture has a vital contribution to make in clarifying the double role of Messiah: first, as the innocent lamb of God, that of suffering and sacrifice; and second, as the antitypical Moses, that of delivering his people.

It is our conviction that the time features of the Passover, particularly those surrounding the selection and slaying of the lamb, take on special significance in relation to the Messiah. For this reason the previous chapters were devoted to an exacting study of the various time relationships, to lay the groundwork for a proper application of these facts. Now we have come to the position of being able to employ this knowledge to test the credentials of any individuals claiming a Messianic role.

In this evaluation, we intend to bring the time features of the Passover to bear upon several personalities who have been prominent in Jewish history. All of those to be considered either assumed for themselves the title of Messiah or were widely acclaimed as such by their followers.

***Messianic Portrayals.*** Among the Jewish people and those sharing their national and religious hopes, it was believed that the Messiah would appear at a time of special testing and tribulation for Israel. It was to be a period when suffering would be experienced in many areas of the world, but especially by the "elect" of Israel. History records that from the first century B.C. onward, a very strong Messianic excitement manifested itself among the Jews. By the first century of the Christian era, this anticipation reached a feverish level, with both learned scribe and common Jew sharing the view. Almost every major event was seized upon

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and analyzed in the light of this Messianic expectation, eliciting much debate and disputation. Josephus mentions Messianic fervor as a main cause of the drift to war with Rome in A.D. 66.<sup>1</sup>

Why would the thought of Messiah's impending appearance stir such vivid emotions? Partial light was shed on this earlier when we glimpsed at some of the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Messiah's reign and the blessings to be expected especially by Israel during that golden era. Further insight is gained from the following descriptions of Messianic expectations among the Jews:

"In Ezra the Messiah is shown as the Lion of Judah at whose roar the last and worst beast--now the Roman eagle--bursts into flame and is consumed; and again as the Son of Man who first annihilates the multitudes of the heathen with the fire and storm of his breath and then, gathering together the lost ten tribes out of alien lands, establishes in Palestine a kingdom in which a reunited Israel can flourish in peace and glory.

"According to Baruch there must come a time of terrible hardship and injustice, which is the time of the last and worst empire, the Roman. Then, just when evil has reached its greatest pitch, the Messiah will appear. A mighty warrior, he will rout and destroy the armies of the enemy; he will take captive the leader of the Romans and bring him in chains to Mount Zion, where he will put him to death; he will establish a kingdom which shall last until the end of the world. All the nations which have ever ruled over Israel will be put to the sword; and some members of the remaining nations will be subjected to the Chosen People. An age of bliss will begin in which pain, disease, untimely death, violence and strife, want and hunger will be unknown and in which the earth will yield its fruits ten thousand fold.

"Would this earthly Paradise last for ever or for some centuries only, pending its replacement by an other-worldly Kingdom? On this matter opinions differed but the question was in any case an academic one. Temporary or eternal, such a Kingdom was worth fighting for; and these apocalypses had at least established that in the course of bringing the Saints into their Kingdom the Messiah would show himself invincible in war."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James Hastings, ed., "Messiah," *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 652; Cecil Roth, ed., "Messiah," *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 1308-1309.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 5.

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Another source continues:

“A definite though blurred image of [Messiah] ... emerges from the welter of overheated fancies, esoteric notions, wild-eyed prophecies and folk legends that have been accumulating about him for nigh to three thousand years among the Jews. It pictures him as God's messenger--the human instrumentality of the Divine Will--who will, at the appointed hour, be sent by God to redeem Israel from its overlong martyrdom of suffering, humiliation, and oppression. It is said also that in the course of fulfilling his divinely appointed mission, he will prove himself to be the greatest of all the Prophets of righteousness in the illustrious line which began with Moses in Egypt.

“The predetermined mission of the Messiah was definitive and clear: the establishment of God's Kingdom *on earth* (not *in Heaven*, as the Christians have it) when brotherhood, peace, and justice would usher in the eternal Sabbath for Israel, and for the rest of mankind as well...[It was to be] a perfect time--a time of unity and fulfillment for both man and beast...

“The establishment of the Kingdom of God *on earth* was envisioned by the prophets of Israel as the principal goal of the Messiah. It was expected to be realized in the Age of Righteousness which God's Messenger of the Redemption would usher into the world ...

“The Messianic kingdom [was one] in which all existence would be reshaped to respond to the heart's desire, and in which every grief would be assuaged, every hunger would be stilled, and every moral value be made triumphant ...

*‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be firmly established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and unto it shall flow all the nations.*

*‘And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us of his ways, and we may walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.*

*‘And he will judge among the nations, and decide for many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and they shall not learn any more war.’ Isaiah 2:2-4”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup>Nathan Ausubel, "Messiahs, Would-be," *The Book of Jewish Knowledge*, pp. 281-282.

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With their literature abounding in Messianic promises, it is no wonder that Jewish emotions were aroused at the slightest prospect of fulfillment. Certainly the long-suffering and patient waiting of the people had been worn thin by the harassment and persecution at the hands of their Gentile conquerors. Especially in the first century of the Christian era, when many were in expectation of the fulfillment of time prophecy regarding the appearance of Messiah, it was almost inevitable that various promising Jewish individuals would be turned to, in the earnest hope that the ANOINTED ONE had arrived. That each in turn gave evidence of apparent failure seemed not to dim the vision so long cherished or the certainty of its eventual accomplishment. Note the following extract from the pen of a Jewish historian:

“The mystical belief in the coming of a personal Messiah fortified the Jew during his precarious existence both in ancient Palestine and later in the lands of the dispersion. During periods of national disaster and persecutions, when hopes for immediate salvation were dim, the people's will to survive was given strong support by the ideal of ultimate justice and salvation that would come miraculously through Divine help in the person of a redeemer or Messiah.

“It is thus easy to understand why in the course of Jewish history there arose individuals who believed that it was within their power to bring salvation to their people. These individuals, whether inspired by a genuine love for their people and religion, or unscrupulous opportunists, succeeded during various periods of Jewish history in arousing the people and creating so-called messianic movements, which ended in great disappointment and despair, but which at the same time gave the people an inner sense of strength.”<sup>4</sup>

There are literally dozens of names which could be cited as Messiahs or pseudo-messiahs, who received wide support for their roles during the last two thousand years. There were Judas of Galilee, who appeared in 6 A.D.; Theudas, 44 A.D. in Palestine; Benjamin the Egyptian, 55-60 A.D., also in Palestine; Menachem, Zealot leader in 67 A.D., same country; Moses, in 440 A.D., on the isle of Crete; Isaac ben Yakub Abu Isa, Yudghan of Hamadan, and Serenus of Syria, all in the 7th century; Abraham Abulafia, in the 13th century in Sicily and Italy, the first of a whole line of Cabalist would-be messiahs; Nissim ben Abraham, in 1295 in Spain; Moses Botarel of Cisneros, in the 14th century; Asher Lammlein, 1502 in Germany; Solomon Molkho, 1530 in Europe; Jacob Frank, in the 18th century in Europe; and many others.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>David Bridger, ed., "Messiah," *The New Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 317-318.

<sup>5</sup>Nathan Ausubel, "Messiahs, Would-be," *The Book of Jewish Knowledge*, pp. 287-290; James Hastings, ed., "Messiahs--Pseudo," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, pp. 581-587.



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In addition to these, and far more prominently known for their roles in this regard, are five outstanding characters whom we have selected for particular review. They are:

- (a) Jesus of Nazareth, 2 B.C.-33 A.D., in Palestine.
- (b) Simeon Bar Kokhba, 135 A.D., in Palestine.
- (c) David Alroy, 1147 A.D., in Mesopotamia.
- (d) David Reubeni, 1491-1535 A.D., in Turkey and Italy.
- (e) Shabbetai Tzevi, 1626-1776 A.D., in Turkey.

As the lives of these individuals are examined, several characteristics are at once apparent. Every one except the first endeavored to fulfill the Messianic hope by political or military means: Bar Kokhba was a great military hero who led the Jewish revolt against Rome; David Alroy called upon the Jews to turn against the Persian ruler; David Reubeni sought the aid of the Pope and European kings to free Palestine from the Turks; and Shabbetai Tzevi sought to overthrow the rule of the Sultan and to lead his people back to the land of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

Outstanding also is the fact that all of these persons except the first obtained the sympathy and backing of the rabbis and other prominent Jews of their day: Bar Kokhba won the support of the current leading scholar, Rabbi R. Akiva; and Shabbetai Tzevi, perhaps the most popular of all the would-be messiahs, received backing from Jewish communities the world over.<sup>7</sup>

But there is another and most significant fact which should not escape our attention either. None of these individuals, except the first, has been able to lay any claim to fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures pertaining to the Messiah, either in respect to the teaching of the Passover type, or in general terms. Thus, for the great majority of these men, their only bid for fame lay in their abortive efforts to free their people from the yoke of the oppressor, ending always in frustration and despair.

We are forced, therefore, to turn our attention to the first name on our list--that of Jesus of Nazareth--and to take a close-up look at his life. Already we have noted the contradictions which appear: He was not concerned with creating a military force nor with initiating political action. He did not receive the backing of the Jewish religious establishment and its leaders. And yet, by common admission, he was the only one whose life gave clear evidence of prophetic fulfillments. Could it be possible that a lowly prophet, raised in obscurity and espousing pacifist teachings, was the long-sought Messenger of God? It seems evident that we will have to take a closer look at Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup>Bridger, *op.cit.*, "Bar Kokhba," p.40; "David Alroy," p.10; "David Reubeni," p.405; "Shabbetai Tzevi," p.440.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 40 and 440.

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***Examining the Correspondencies.*** In terms of the historical records which are available relating to Jesus of Nazareth, scholars are universally agreed that the most reliable sources are the New Testament Gospels. These writings take us back two thousand years and are contemporaneous with the events they describe. We will, therefore, use these accounts, comparing the testimonies of their authors with each other for verification and harmony.

Our investigation into the credentials of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah will be somewhat unique, inasmuch as it will revolve almost entirely about the Passover picture. The vital question to ponder will be: Do the incidents in the life of Jesus hold up under close scrutiny to reveal an unmistakable fulfillment of the type, or do we still need to look for another?

We begin this search by recalling the Lord Jehovah's original instructions to Moses concerning the Passover lamb, as recorded in Exodus 12:3-8. These were very explicit and are identified in the following order:

- (a) The day and month when the lamb would be selected.
- (b) The physical qualifications of the lamb.
- (c) The day of the month when the lamb would be slain.
- (d) The hour of the day when the lamb would be slain.

In addition, we should also consider the purpose for which the paschal lamb was slain and the benefits resulting from the sacrifice. These latter points will be reserved for a later chapter. For now, let us examine each one of the listed items in turn, noting whether there are any correspondencies in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

***(a) "In the tenth day of this month [Nisan] they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house." Exod. 12:3***

Turning to the 12th chapter of the Gospel of John, we read:

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***"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead ... On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." John 12:1,12-13***

It is evident from this account that Jesus' last days were intimately tied together with the celebration of the Passover. This was the event responsible for bringing him to the city of Jerusalem and it was in relation to that event that Jesus' activities are described. Nisan was the month in which the Passover fell each spring, and it was the Jewish custom to select the sacrificial lamb on the tenth day of this month, permitting it to be purged prior to being eaten by the entire household.

***"Six days before the passover"*** in the above passage would have been the 9th day of Nisan, assuming it was the holiday or feast of the Passover on the 15th day to which reference was being made. The "next day," therefore, would have been the 10th day. It was on this day, according to the account, that Jesus presented himself to the people who had gathered in Jerusalem from all over the land. Collectively, these would fittingly represent the national Jewish house, which on this occasion hailed Jesus of Nazareth as prophet and "king" with great joy and anticipation.

In the antitypical events of the tenth day, we appear to have a clear correspondency to this first portion of the Old Testament text. However, since in itself this might have been coincidental or even have been purposely arranged, let us go on to the next point.

***(b) "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats." Exod. 12:5***

The position of the New Testament in regard to the nature of Jesus is that he was ***"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"*** (Hebrews 7:26), born into the world as a perfect human being untainted with sin. This is predicated on the belief that his human life was begotten by the Father, Jehovah God, thus bypassing the detrimental, hereditary effects of birth to sinful, fallen parents. The possession of such perfect human life would appear as a necessary correspondency to the requirement of the paschal lamb: a male, of the first year [in the prime of life], and without blemish [evidence of imperfection].

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The Bible declares that all mankind, with the exception of the first man Adam, have been born into this world in an imperfect condition; none has been able to escape the condemnation in Adam which, through heredity, has been passed upon all. In the Old Testament we read, "***The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***" (Psalm 14:2,3) In the New Testament, we read, "***By the offense of one [the first man, Adam], judgment came upon all men to condemnation; ... by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners.***" (Romans 5:18,19) These teachings appear to rule out the possibility that any ordinary human being, one born in the usual manner and inheriting the Adamic condemnation, could be without blemish, whether it be physical, mental, or moral.

It is only by giving credence to the miraculous birth of Jesus that it is possible to think of him as being perfect or without blemish as would be required to fulfill this aspect of the paschal type in the fullest sense. This is not the place to analyze the pros and cons of the virgin birth; but the reader should certainly investigate this subject thoroughly to his own satisfaction, to determine its feasibility in the divine purpose. The necessity for Messiah's exhibiting the same perfection of human nature with which man was originally endowed by the Creator is an important concept to be elaborated upon subsequently. For now we will merely point out that the mechanics required for bringing this to pass obviously would be dependent upon the exercise of miracle-working power.

While it has not been Jewish custom to emphasize God's past intervention in the course of human affairs by means of miracles, nonetheless it is evident that the Old Testament abounds in such events. The very circumstances surrounding the plagues upon Egypt, and the momentous events connected with the Passover and the Exodus, offer eloquent testimony to the fundamental place occupied by miracles in the Jewish faith. Would it therefore appear unreasonable if the same Mighty Being who was able to harness the forces of nature on behalf of His people of old were to direct this same Power in other ways consistent with His plan for man's redemption?

***(c) "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month [Nisan] and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it . . ." Exod. 12:6***

To determine on what day Jesus was slain, we turn to the testimony of the Gospels. In John 18:28 we read: "***Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early [in the morning]; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, that they might not be defiled but might eat the Passover.***" According to this passage, when Jesus was led to Pilate's judgment hall, his accusers refused to enter it themselves, lest they become ceremonially unclean and unable to eat of the passover feast. This indicates that the Passover proper had not yet commenced and preparations were still being made for its celebration.

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In John 19:13,14 we find a similar passage:

***"Pilate ... brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat. ... And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour."***

What day was the "preparation of the passover" mentioned in this text? We agree with most Bible commentators that reference was being made to the 14th day of Nisan on which the lambs were slain in the temple, preparatory to the feast which began in the evening (or beginning) of the 15th day. Thus it was on this preparation day, reckoned as starting in the evening of the day before, that Jesus was seized, was condemned to death, was crucified and finally died.

The account of the plotting of the chief priests and others against Jesus, recorded in Matthew 26:3-5, fits in perfectly with this sequence:

***"Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."***

The feast day was the 15th of Nisan, as we saw earlier, and was a holy convocation unto the Lord. In addition, that year the 15th day of Nisan apparently coincided with the regular weekly sabbath, making it a special or "high" day. (See John 19:31) The authorities did not want to cause any commotion on this day, for fear of the reaction of the people. They therefore agreed that their plot to kill Jesus would have to be consummated before that time. The "day of preparation" would satisfy this requirement.

The following commentaries by Bible scholars will serve to summarize the New Testament's teaching pertaining to the day of Jesus' death. The last one includes the testimony of the tractate Sanhedrin as well:

"The Gospel of John ... declares that Jesus was crucified during the last few hours before the Passover began. In other words, the Friday on which Jesus died ... was Nisan 14 rather than Nisan 15; the Day of Preparation rather than the Passover itself. While there is still much disagreement over the issue among New Testament scholars, it appears to this writer that in this instance the Johannine ... tradition must be accepted."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>James Hastings, ed., "Jesus Christ," *Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 487-488.

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"It was in harmony with this type of the killing of the Passover lamb on the 14th day of the first month--the day preceding the seven days' Feast of the Passover, celebrated by the Jews--that [Jesus] died, as the antitypical Passover Lamb, 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' At no other time was it possible for [Jesus] to have finished in death the sacrifice which he began when he was thirty years of age, in his baptism unto death."<sup>9</sup>

"According to the Fourth Gospel the crucifixion itself took place on the day of Preparation, that is, the day on which the lambs were slain in preparation for the passover meal which followed that night; and this day was itself immediately prior to the sabbath, a sabbath which was a 'high day,' no doubt meaning that it was at the same time the first day of passover (John 19:31). The representation in the Fourth Gospel is supported by 1 Cor. 5:7, 'Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed'; and by the tractate Sanhedrin, 'On the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged.'<sup>10</sup>

The final point of possible correspondency concerns the hour of day when the lamb was slain. It was to clarify this time feature in particular that the main thrust of the first part of this presentation was directed.

***(d) ". . . and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." [literally, "between the two evenings."] Exod. 12:6***

To facilitate the determination of the exact hour of Jesus' death, we have listed in table form the statements made by the authors of all the Gospels:

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<sup>9</sup>Charles T. Russell, *The New Creation*, p. 461.

<sup>10</sup>Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, pp. 596-597.

## **EXHIBIT F**

### **FIXING THE HOUR OF JESUS' DEATH**

<b>Text:</b>	<b>Statement:</b>
Matt. 27:45-50	Expired about the 9th hour (3 P.M.). Darkness from 6th hour to 9th hour (12-3 P.M.)
Mark 15:25-37	Crucified at the 3rd hour (9 A.M.); remained on cross to 9th hour (3 P.M.). Darkness from 6th hour to 9th hour (12-3 P.M.)
Luke 23:44-46	Not stated, other than in expression "there was darkness over all the earth" from the 6th to the 9th hour (12-3 P.M.).
John 19:14-18	Crucified sometime after the 6th hour; no time given for death.

At first glance, there appears to be some discrepancy in the different accounts concerning the hour of Jesus' death. This can be reconciled without too much difficulty. First of all, let us note that there is complete harmony in all three synoptic gospels on the period of darkness which set in--from the sixth to the ninth hours (noon to three o'clock by the common reckoning, starting at dawn or 6 A.M.). In addition, the Matthew account sets the time of death at about the ninth hour (3 o'clock). The only problem, then, pertains to the hour when the crucifixion began, this being given as the third hour by Mark and as shortly after the sixth hour by John.

Concerning this question, the scholar Finegan suggests a probable reconciliation based upon different methods of reckoning the time of day.<sup>11</sup> The "third hour" of Mark by common reckoning would be nine o'clock in the morning. But the "sixth hour" of John, assuming the Roman method of reckoning starting from midnight, would be six o'clock in the morning. At that hour Jesus' fate was probably close to being decided by Pilate, which would allow adequate time for his ensuing mistreatment before being crucified at nine o'clock. Hence, John's version of the crucifixion as occurring sometime after six o'clock is in reasonable agreement with the synoptic Gospels.

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<sup>11</sup>Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p.291.

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Note also that all of the Gospel writers portray Jesus' expiration on the cross as taking place toward the close of the day. About three o'clock in the afternoon (the ninth hour by common reckoning) was the apparent hour of death. John's Gospel, as we have seen, clearly identified this day as the Day of Preparation, which was the 14th day of Nisan. And this was the day upon which the Passover lambs were slain in the type, both at the time of the original Passover and in Jesus' era.

If our conclusion as presented earlier regarding the exact timing of the slaying of the paschal lambs is correct; that is, if "between the two evenings" indicated the closing portion of the day (about three P.M.), then indeed we have here a remarkable time correspondency. The relationship appears to be perfect. Since time is such a vital feature of the Passover type, we cannot help but consider this fulfillment to be of major significance.

The exact parallel between the slaughtering of the paschal lambs and the death of Jesus has not escaped the attention of Bible commentators:

"For fourteen centuries the Passover had been pointing forward to the coming of the Paschal Lamb. Jesus ate the Passover, substituted in its place his own Supper, and then was himself slain at the very hour in which paschal lambs were being slain in the Temple."<sup>12</sup>

"Jesus was crucified on a knoll just outside the northern city gate. He died when the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the Temple and he was buried the same evening."<sup>13</sup>

All four points bearing upon Jehovah's original instructions to Moses concerning the Passover lamb have now been covered. In each, it has been possible to trace a corresponding occurrence in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, especially in the circumstances surrounding his death. The similarities have not been merely of a vague or general nature, but have been quite specific in their application. Our mind can only conclude that in each of the areas investigated so far, we have found a fulfillment of the Passover type. On this basis, Jesus' credentials as the Messiah appear both valid and impressive.

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<sup>12</sup>H. H. Halley, *Pocket Bible Handbook*, p. 398.

<sup>13</sup>Louis Shores, ed., "Jesus Christ," *Collier's Encyclopedia*, VI., p. 553.



## **VI. JESUS OF NAZARETH: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

This brief examination into the credentials of Jesus so far has been based almost entirely on the Passover type. The results have shown evidence of very clear correspondencies in his life, particularly toward the close of his career. In terms of the time relationships, so precise have these fulfillments been that we would be amiss if we were not to label them as extraordinary.

But a valid appraisal of Jesus of Nazareth obviously cannot be based solely on his relationship to the Passover type. We have stressed this phase merely because the force and beauty of such an approach are frequently overlooked. On the other hand, it is quite commonly known that the life of Jesus exhibits in remarkable degree many of the characteristics which the Old Testament prophets indicated that God's Anointed would possess.

*A Deceptive Role?* But may we reflect for a moment. Could it be possible that Jesus and his followers were guilty of deception in that they merely acted out the role of the antitype as far as it was possible, to leave the impression that he was the Messiah? This contention is the theme of a contemporary scholarly work which received wide acclaim, entitled *The Passover Plot*, by Hugh Schonfield. Not only does its author believe that Jesus schemed to be crucified at the Passover season; he feels that his entire life revolved about a gigantic conspiracy to act out the role of Messiah by deliberate fulfillment of as many Biblical prophecies as possible. Schonfield writes:

"[Jesus had a strong sensitivity to the] implications of his people's history (which) led him to see himself as the embodiment of their hopes. In his own person he dramatized their dreams and saw himself acting out the prophecies. We may hold that this is how he came to marshal the messianic predictions in order as no one else had done so that they acquired the form of a drama developing to its appointed climax. His visualization of the role of the Messiah was highly theatrical, and he played out the part like an actor with careful timing and appreciation of what every act called for ... Only one who possessed such a consciousness could have conceived, contrived and carried out the Passover Plot so masterfully and so superbly ..."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, p. 68.

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"These things had to come about in the manner predicted by the Scriptures and after preliminaries entailing the most careful scheming and plotting to produce them. Moves and situations had to be anticipated, rulers and associates had to perform their functions without realizing that they were being used. A conspiracy had to be organized of which the victim was himself the deliberate secret instigator."<sup>2</sup>

Schonfield also has an explanation for the crucifixion of Jesus and succeeding events. He believes that these likewise formed a part of the larger plot to manipulate events to fit the pattern of prophecies. By careful planning, Jesus' suffering on the cross was kept to a bare minimum, and he was removed before it endangered his life. The impression of a premature death was made by administering drugs. By speedy delivery of the "corpse" to a waiting friend, he was revived and enabled to recuperate.<sup>3</sup> Thus seen, the death, entombment, and resurrection of Jesus were all a farce, merely parts of the performance.

Such a sweeping allegation leveled against the very foundations of Christianity ordinarily would not be deemed worthy of serious consideration. Yet, such an attractive case has been made for this contention and such persuasive arguments advanced that an honest reply seems in order. Although it is not within the space limitations of this presentation to provide a complete rebuttal, the following points are offered for careful consideration:

(a) Notwithstanding the title selected for his work, Schonfield does not demonstrate an acute awareness of the significant time aspects of the Passover. As already shown, not only did the type reveal the day on which the lambs were to be slaughtered, but the hour as well. Schonfield covers the first half of this requirement with the incredible assumption that it was within the power of one individual--who in the eyes of the authorities was considered a common criminal--to have himself arraigned and "slain" on the day of his own choosing. But there his speculation abruptly ceases, totally ignoring the second half of the time requirement. No explanation whatever is offered for how Jesus might have been able to dictate the very hour of his crucifixion and "death," to conform to the type. In view of the mass confusion of events which accompanied his arrest and trial, being shuttled back and forth from the chief priests, to Pilate, to Herod, and back again to Pilate, it seems wholly unreasonable to believe that Jesus was so fully in control of his destiny that he was able to manipulate the precise hour of his "demise."

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 158-168.

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(b) Schonfield's basic proposition that Jesus and his followers intentionally conspired to bring about his own crucifixion is completely without historic foundation and is directly in contradiction to the Gospel accounts. It also seems wholly unreasonable for the simple fact that no one could be certain of the outcome of such a scheme. Would any ringleader acting in the capacity of an imposter, whether himself deluded or not, be willing to take the risk of forfeiting his own life in order to perpetuate a fraud? After all, a crucifixion was a public spectacle, supervised by Roman authorities, and carried out by a band of hardened soldiers. What would be the chances of successfully deceiving everyone respecting his death and of removing the "body" alive?

Any assertion of the success of such an alleged plot on Jesus' part is but speculation in its grossest form and stands flatly repudiated by the testimony of the Gospel writers. Their accounts indicate that Jesus' body was not taken off the cross until one of the attending Roman soldiers, immuned to death and acts of violence, pierced his body through with a spear as a precautionary measure. (John 19:33) This soldier and his companions were all convinced that Jesus was indeed dead. And this fact was conveyed to Pilate by their commanding officer as a prerequisite to releasing the body to Joseph of Arimathea for burial. Mark 15:42-45

(c) Schonfield's contention that Jesus merely acted out the role of Messiah and only pretended to die also ignores the repercussion which Jesus' life has had upon the sweep of human history. Many crusaders for just causes have appeared on the scene; thousands of such idealists were put to death as they met the opposition of the established leaders of their day. Many of these had extensive followings, some much better organized than Jesus'. But none has approached the exceptional influence which Jesus has exerted on men or perpetuated a movement that has grown to such astounding proportions.

It must have been a profound happening, indeed, which convinced Jesus' followers of the validity of their belief and provided the motivation for the tremendous zeal and enthusiasm displayed in spreading the faith so quickly and effectively into all the world. What was it that so convincingly moved the members of this small Jewish sect? It was the assurance that Jesus was not only a prophet of God and a preacher of righteousness, but the Messiah of promise; that he

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had been unjustly put to death to permit him to lay down his life as the substitutionary sacrifice for all mankind; and that God had raised him from the dead, to become the head of the church--that body of individuals willing to follow in his footsteps and to spread his teachings into all the earth. This was a belief which promised no earthly gain but almost certainly would entail hardship and suffering. The "Christian," as he was now designated, was to be a pilgrim and stranger in this world, holding forth the word of life and the way of salvation, while waiting patiently for the reappearance of the Messiah and the inauguration of the new age of blessing.

Could anything less than a positive conviction of Jesus' death, resurrection, and future return as the Messiah in glory have prompted such an amazing reaction on the part of this little group of followers? With the failure of the aspirations of many honest and sincere reformers of the past, it is unthinkable that one merely pretending to be the Messiah, as Schonfield contends, could evoke such a response and make such an impact on the minds of men. We think it reasonable to conclude that only the stark reality of the crucifixion and the joyful realization of the empty tomb were able to provide the impetus for such an enduring movement.

(d) A final point has to do with the fulfillment of the Old Testament forecast of Messiah in the life of Jesus. While it is beyond the province of this present study to consider the multitudinous prophecies detailing the birth, upbringing, and activities of the Messiah, other than as illustrated in the Passover type, a few general comments will not be out of order. We have reserved for the next chapter a consideration of what is perhaps the most spectacular of the Old Testament time prophecies, one that furnishes the exact year of Messiah's appearance. Here let us note the wide range of other predictions pertaining to Messiah:

Lineage through David--Isa. 9:6-7; 2 Sam. 7:8,12-16  
Miraculous birth--Isa. 7:14  
Humble birth in Bethlehem--Mic. 5:2  
Descent into Egypt--Hos. 11:1; Num. 24:8  
Introduction by prophet-like forerunner--Isa. 40:3  
Ministry in Galilee--Isa. 9:1-2  
Teaching in parables--Isa. 6:8-10; Psa. 78:1-3  
Works of healing--Isa. 53:4  
Preaching salvation and deliverance--Isa. 61:1  
Lover of righteousness-- Psa. 45:7; Psa. 35:28  
Triumphal entry into Jerusalem--Zech.9:9

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Despised and rejected by own people--Isa. 53:3; Psa. 69:8, 20  
Disbelieved by rulers--Psa. 118:22-23; Isa. 49:7  
Life as man of sorrows and smitten--Isa. 53:3-5  
Betrayal by friend--Psa. 41:9; Psa. 55:12-14  
Price of betrayal: thirty pieces of silver--Zech. 11:12-13  
Falsely accused--Psa. 35:11; Psa. 109:2  
Desertion by own disciples--Psa. 38:11  
Silent under accusation--Isa. 53:7, Psa. 38:12-13  
Subjected to mocking, buffeting, and scourging--Psa.35:15-16  
Division of garments by lots--Psa. 22:18  
Given vinegar to drink--Psa. 69:21  
Last words spoken--Psa. 22:1; Psa. 31:5  
Put to death in prime of life--Psa. 89:38, 44-45  
Death by crucifixion--Psa. 22:14-17  
Vicarious suffering--Isa. 53:8, 10-12  
Piercing of side--Zech.12:10  
Bones not to be broken--Psa. 34:20  
Death with malefactors--Isa. 53:9, 12  
Burial in tomb of rich man--Isa. 53:9  
Resurrection from the dead-- Psa. 16:10-11

In all, there are approximately three hundred prophecies, many very specific in their application, describing some aspect of the life and work of the Messiah. It would appear to be stretching our credibility beyond all reason to suppose that it would be possible for one human being, no matter how gifted or intelligent, to be able to so manipulate the vicissitudes of his life that he could fulfill them all. Certainly the very best one could do would be to direct the course of his affairs during his mature years along certain general lines. But how does this explain the precise fulfillments in areas beyond Jesus' control, such as his birth, genealogy, early places of residence, and the like?

No, such an astounding, detailed composite of the Messiah, provided by many different prophets living in different eras, many years before his coming, could not be seized upon and acted out in its entirety in a fraudulent or deluded manner. The fulfillment of all of these unique prophecies in the life of one Jesus of Nazareth speaks of a higher purpose and a divine appointment. It is a plain fact of history that no one before him and no one after him has been able to demonstrate such a life, the life of God's Anointed One, the Messiah of Israel.

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Even Schonfield admits, "It is needful to emphasize that neither before nor since Jesus has there been anyone whose experiences from first to last have been so pin-pointed as tallying with what were held to be prophetic intimations concerning the Messiah."<sup>4</sup> It is of singular importance that the credentials of none other have been able to pass the requirements of the prophetic examination. No one else in this regard has dared come forward!

**Rejected by Authorities.** In the light of these facts, with the whole array of self-evident fulfillments of the prophetic word in the life of Jesus, the obvious question arises: Why was Jesus not recognized as the Messiah by the religious rulers of Israel, those who should have been most qualified to make the judgment? But before coming to grips with this question, a brief background sketch should be helpful.

As previously shown, in the first century of the Christian era the entire Jewish world was in feverish expectation of Messiah's appearance. The political events of the day had combined with the understanding of time prophecy to indicate that the fulfillment was at hand. Although the Roman rule was not oppressive and actually provided some liberties, the effect of almost continual subserviency to one conqueror after another was cumulative: the Jewish people longed mightily for deliverance. Thus the Messianic hope and speculations as to how and when it could be realized became uppermost in every mind.

At this juncture and in dramatic manner, John the Baptist appeared on the scene, teaching with the authority of Elijah of old. He was a fearless and rugged individual with a keen sense of social justice. He made a strong appeal to the Jewish conscience, reminding the crowds that gathered about him of their deflection from the covenant God made with their fathers and of their lapse into sin. Coupled with the call for moral reform, he proclaimed an impending judgment, and to all who would heed he offered baptism for the remission of sins. But to the special delegations of priests sent from Jerusalem to inquire of his identity he merely said, "***I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.***" John 1:23

While consistently disclaiming the honor of messiahship, John the Baptist did not discourage the common belief that Messiah's appearance was imminent. To the contrary, he encouraged this hope by saying: "***I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not***

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 44.

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**worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit . . . "** (John 1:26-27; Mat. 3:11) Presently, John identified the one of whom he spoke; looking directly at Jesus, he said: **"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me ... "** (John 1:29-30) Then followed John's untimely death at the hands of Herod, leaving Jesus of Nazareth thrust upon the nation; thus the eyes of all began to focus upon him.

What impression might Jesus have made? He was an unschooled man of humble birth and rearing. Following his introduction by John, he began to teach the people with the voice of authority. He displayed a vast knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, but more important, he demonstrated great skill in drawing meaningful applications of them. Jesus' insights into the needs of men, his sympathy with the infirmities of the people, and his willingness to seek them out where they were found, made a tremendous appeal to the masses. **"The common people heard him gladly,"** (Mark 12:37) and multitudes followed him everywhere. Works of healing such as had not been witnessed since the days of the prophets became a prominent feature of his ministry. These works were attributed to the power of God: **"miracles and wonders and signs [were performed] in the midst of the people to demonstrate [God's] approval of Jesus of Nazareth."** Acts 2:22

Much of Jesus' teaching centered about the character and traits of God, His loving concern for all men, and His legitimate claims on the allegiance and devotion of His creatures. Jesus' conception of the Almighty carried with it the traditional reverence and awe with which Jehovah had always been esteemed in the Jewish mind; but it also included a warm, personal feeling toward God which interpreted Him as being within reach of the common man. Jehovah God was indeed the great First Cause, the Creator, and the Sovereign of the Universe; the Giver of the Law Covenant with Moses; the Protector under whose providence the affairs of Israel were especially directed. But in addition, Jesus portrayed Him as being interested in the needs of individuals and desirous of their walking in His righteous ways to achieve life's highest purpose.

The historian Latourette writes:

"[Jesus taught] men that they should trust God, even when they could not fully understand his ways. He taught that God forgives and he also insisted that a prerequisite to that forgiveness is a man's forgiveness of his fellows ... He had much to say of the goodness and kindness of God and his favourite term for him was Father. As Father men might trust him and his care and Jesus called on them to imitate him in his impartial kindness toward the evil and the good. <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Kenneth S. Latourette, *The First Five Centuries*, p.51. (Latourette's views of Jesus' ministry impressed us favorably and form the basis of much of our discussion in this section.)

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus gave an enormous prominence in his teaching to what he termed "*the Kingdom of God*" and "*the Kingdom of Heaven.*" The record states that he "*went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.*" (Mat. 9:35) The subject of the Kingdom became the all-absorbing theme of his ministry. At least thirty parables were devoted to it and he gave it a prominent place in the model prayer requested by his disciples: "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" Mat. 6:10

Concerning Jesus' views on the subject of the Kingdom, Latourette writes:

"To him the Kingdom of God was both a present fact and a future consummation. Men were to accept it one by one and were to become citizens of it by their own volition. It was not a state with physical boundaries, but embraced men who continued to mingle in ordinary society. Yet Jesus also looked forward to the time when, by the act of God, the present age would be swept away and the Kingdom of God would come ... Some of the words attributed to him may be interpreted as implying that he surmised that the final act in the drama of the present age might be greatly delayed. Whether present or future, long deferred or imminent, to his mind the Kingdom of God clearly had implications for social relations. The members of the Kingdom were to act towards their fellows in accordance with certain principles. Chief among these was love. The citizens of the heavenly order were to practice active goodwill to those about them, with forgiveness, kindness, and humility.

"It is significant that Jesus did not attempt, as Messiah, to bring in the Kingdom of God by political means. In a community seething with nationalistic aspirations and where many were restive under the relatively mild rule of the Romans, Jesus made no effort to organize revolt, as some of his fellow countrymen expected the Messiah to do...Far from organizing a revolt against Rome, Jesus enjoined, in somewhat cryptic fashion, continued acceptance of its rule...



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“Why Jesus made so little of organization must be a matter of conjecture. It may be that he expected the early end of the present age and the speedy inauguration of the final state of the Kingdom of Heaven by the direct act of God. If so, organization would have been unnecessary and would even have implied a lack of faith ... It is ... probable that with his profound faith in God he believed that in his own good time and way the Father would bring in the Kingdom, and that the Kingdom did not come in such tangible form that men could say, ‘lo, here, or lo, there,’ but that, at least until the great final deed of God, it would spread in unorganized and, perhaps, quite unspectacular fashion. It looks as though Jesus had a profound distrust of elaborate organized effort or at least an indifference to it as a means of bringing in a better day.’<sup>6</sup>

It should be remarked that to the common folk who came to hear him preach, Jesus was not a radical or a religious heretic. He was warmly received, both in the synagogue and in open air gatherings. Some thought him a prophet; some the Messiah; but almost all were convinced that he was a teacher sent from God. It was evident that his sayings were inseparably linked with the writings and traditions of his own people. He appeared to take great delight in quoting from the sacred Scriptures, particularly from the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets. This is not to say that Jesus did not advance any new concepts or did not inaugurate a movement which was entirely different and fresh; for these he assuredly did. But the fundamentals of his teachings were firmly rooted in the highest and most sacred of the Hebrew traditions.

Above all that Jesus said and did, it was the character of the man himself that deeply impressed the people. Though preaching with the voice of authority, he exhibited none of the traits usually associated with the authoritative: he was not proud, haughty, dictatorial, or rude in his relations with others. Instead of lording it over his fellows and demanding their submission, he was meek and compassionate, patient and kind; willing to be spent in the unselfish service of others, even to the point of sheer exhaustion. Love toward all was his standard, in the highest sense of that word, including friend and foe alike.

Such traits of true nobility could not go unnoticed; nor could they do other than leave indelible marks in the lives of those who knew him, and elicit feelings of the highest regard and devotion toward him. No wonder that without the slightest evidence that he could raise a military force, such a vital consideration in some minds, they became convinced that he was indeed the long awaited Messiah and sought to proclaim him King.

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.51-54.

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But to the religious leaders of Israel, the scribal teachers and their Pharisaic lay followers, it was an altogether different matter. The ministry of Jesus simply did not fit into the pattern of their expectations for Messiah. True, they were forced to recognize him as a religious teacher of the first rank and they respected his influence among the people. But what he said brought them no comfort and served only to embarrass and to expose them. To their dismay, he began to attack their long-established ceremonies as vain and contrary to true worship. He deplored their hypocritical displays of holiness, their fastings, flowing garments, and repetitious prayers before men. And for them he reserved his harshest and most incisive criticism, as he sought to warn the people against them:

*"Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. 'The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees,' he said, 'are the authorized interpreters of Moses' Law. So you must obey and follow everything they tell you to do; do not, however, imitate their actions, because they do not practice what they preach. They fix up heavy loads and tie them on men's backs, yet they aren't willing even to lift a finger to help them carry those loads.*

*"They do everything just so people will see them. See how big are the containers with Scripture verses on their foreheads and arms, and notice how long are the hems of their cloaks! They love the best places at feasts and the reserved seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the market places and have people call them Teacher [Rabbi]. You must not be called Teacher [Rabbi], for you are all brothers of one another and have only one Teacher [Master, who is Christ] ... The greatest one among you must be your servant. And whoever makes himself great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be made great.*

*"[Alas] for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in men's faces, but you yourselves will not go in, and neither will you let people in who are trying to go in!*

*"[Alas] for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You take advantage of widows and rob them of their homes, and then make a show of saying long prayers! Because of this your punishment will be all the worse! ...*

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***“[Alas] for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You give to God one tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such as mint, dill, and cummin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty. These you should practice, without neglecting the others. Blind guides! You strain a fly out of your drink, but swallow a camel!*”**

***“[Alas] for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You clean the outside of your cup and plate, while the inside is full of things you have gotten by violence and selfishness. Blind Pharisee! Clean what is inside the cup first, and then the outside will be clean too!*”**

***“[Alas] for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! Impostors! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside, but are full of dead men's bones and rotten stuff on the inside. In the same way, on the outside you appear to everybody as good, but inside you are full of lies and sins.” Mat. 23:1-8,11-14,23-28 (TEV)***

In the face of such sweeping condemnation, it was only to be expected that the religious leaders would become violently opposed to the ministry of Jesus. They carefully scrutinized his every word and act, in an attempt to come up with some justifiable grounds for finding fault. However, since Jesus accepted without question the Law as the word of God, their attempts along these lines were not easy. In the main, the clashes which did occur concerned the elaborate system of rituals and interpretations which the rabbis had developed in connection with the Law, but which were actually separate from it. (See Mark 7:1-23 as an example.)

It was in relation to the Sabbath that the religious leaders thought they could build their strongest case against Jesus. After all, were there not confirmed reports of his permitting the disciples to pluck grains of wheat on this day to satisfy their hunger? And did he not openly perform works of healing on the Sabbath whenever the need arose, even in the synagogue before the entire congregation? Here appeared to be flagrant violations of God's command to rest on the seventh day. See Mark 2:23-3:5.

It did not seem to occur to his opponents who were so quick to condemn and so anxious to find fault, that Jesus' fresh interpretation of the Sabbath Law was actually magnifying it and making it more honorable. He was endeavoring to show that the Sabbath requirement was intended to benefit man, not to shackle him to a meaningless ritual:

***"He said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days." Mat. 12:11,12***

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*"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day, that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." Mark 3:1-5*

Thus in Jesus' eyes none of God's laws were incompatible with basic human needs, but were designed to work out a blessing for men. But such views brought him more and more into open conflict with those who sat in Moses' seat and considered themselves the proper authorities to settle all religious questions.

This conflict with the religious leaders of Israel reached its climax in Jerusalem, the location of the Temple and chief site of Jewish worship. It was here that Jesus carried out his boldest act in a series of moves calculated to expose hypocrisy and corruption in the highest places. Not only did Jesus criticize the unreasonable and burdensome traditions set up by the Scribes which tended to nullify the true commandments of God; in Jerusalem he decided to openly challenge the authority of the priestly hierarchy responsible for administering the affairs of the Temple. This he symbolized by upsetting the established routine of using the Temple as the site of trading and selling of animal sacrifices. In an unprecedented act, he indignantly overturned the tables of the money-changers and merchants and drove out the animals, saying: ***"It is written in the Scriptures that God said, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.' But you have turned it into a hideout for thieves!"*** Mark 11:15-17 (TEV)

Jesus' charges against the Jewish hierarchy of that period were not without foundation. Schonfield writes:

"We have evidence that the chief priests at the time were arrogant and high-handed, loving wealth and power and position ... The chief priests themselves had a vested interest in the Temple market and grew rich on their share in the transactions ... What otherwise might have been a legitimate activity was converted into an evil by profiteering and the pursuit of gain ... Poor people were often in distress in having to meet artificially inflated prices in discharging their religious duties."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Schonfield, *op.cit.*, pp.137 and 123.

*Jesus of Nazareth*

There were other reasons why Jesus might not have been recognized by the religious leaders. The official expectation was not for a lowly and meek Messiah, willing to suffer the reproaches of men. It was a mighty deliverer who was sought, one who could throw off the yoke of Rome and elevate Israel to a place of prominence and leadership in the world. The life of Jesus was too full of contradictions to fit into this way of thinking. How could one be the Messiah who showed no interest or skill in organizing a military force? Or yet more puzzling, one who espoused pacifist principles and love not only for fellow men but even for one's enemies? Besides, his attack on the existing leadership caused them to distrust his motives and stirred up strong personal prejudices against a favorable interpretation of his Messiahship from the prophetic evidences.

In the end, the Jewish leaders were overcome by the personal animosities which Jesus' teachings aroused. In almost predictable fashion the high priests at Jerusalem decided to do away with him and remove entirely this vexing threat to their authority. A new pretense was seized upon when some heard Jesus teach of his sonship with the Father, which was construed to mean he claimed to be the Almighty God. Here was blasphemy in its clearest form! In addition, a Roman trial with an ensuing death penalty could be arranged by using his claimed Messiahship as the basis for a charge of treason against the Emperor.

Perhaps all of this could be rationalized by those plotting Jesus' death: They had heard many marvelous reports of his activities. He was supposed to have healed the sicknesses of thousands. His sayings were irrefutable, even by doctors of the law. Their own officers confessed, "*Never man spake as this man.*" There were even witnesses who maintained he had restored the dead to life.

If the authorities were mistaken about his identity as the Messiah, in the end it would work out all right. If indeed he was the son of God, the Anointed One of promise, and if the never-ending reports about him were not exaggerated, he would surely not allow himself to be abused. A death penalty would, in fact, provide the ideal test for Jesus: if he could supernaturally defend himself, his true identity would be revealed and the world would be apprised of his mission. And if he could not do these things--then he would be deserving of death as an impostor.

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Consequently, the high priests ordered Jesus' arrest and sent a group of soldiers and Temple guards to seize him. It was Judas, one of Jesus' own disciples, who was willing to betray him and led the band to him. Bound as a common criminal, he was first brought before Annas, a religious official, for preliminary questioning, then taken to Caiaphas, the High Priest. Perhaps no trial in the annals of human history has stirred so much feeling and aroused so much emotion as the trial of Jesus, with all the publicity and acclaim it has received through the years. Many of the issues are still unsettled and subject to debate. The following excerpts provide a brief summary by recognized authorities:

"The trial of Jesus was twofold, religious and civil. First the religious authorities of his own people examined him on the charge that he had disobeyed the traditions of the Old Testament and made blasphemous claims about himself. They adjudged him guilty. Although the punishment prescribed for the sin of blasphemy was death (Lev. 24:16), the Jews did not execute the punishment; historians disagree about whether they had a right to mete out capital punishment. Instead they referred the case of Jesus to the civil authorities, and it became necessary for him to have a second trial before the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate ...

"Close to historical accuracy appears to be the view that against his better judgment [Pilate] yielded to the pressures of the populace and of their leaders for reasons of political expediency, giving the command that Jesus be crucified. Students of both Jewish and Roman law have raised questions regarding the legality of Jesus' trial on the grounds that prescribed conditions for the trial of a capital offense were not present.

"Another question that has frequently been raised, usually in the context of Jewish-Christian relations, is whether the Jews or the Romans were primarily responsible for Jesus' death. Christian theology and piety at their most profound have generally replied that the joint action of Jew and Gentile in the crucifixion of Jesus is a symbol of the guilt of the entire human race."<sup>8</sup>

"In the end it was the Jerusalem hierarchy and the officers of the Roman army of occupation who put Jesus to death, not the Galilean scribes and Pharisees or the ordinary priests living here and there throughout the country; certainly it was not the common people who loved and honored him enthusiastically but were powerless to defend him in the crisis. Above all, it was not the Jewish people as a whole who rejected Jesus and were responsible for his death."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>*Encyclopedia Britannica*, (1970 edit.), "Jesus Christ," XII., p. 1021.

<sup>9</sup>*Encyclopedia Americana*, (1969 edit.), "Jesus Christ," XVI., p. 44.

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The most penetrating question remaining for us to consider is why Jesus was willing to suffer the reproaches of men, to stand an unjust trial, to be branded a blasphemer of the God he loved so dearly, and to undergo the public disgrace and humiliation of death by crucifixion. The miracle-working power of God had been at his disposal throughout his ministry and almost continually was employed for the benefit of his fellows. Why, then, did he not choose to use this same power in defending himself and in announcing his messiahship to the world?

We will reserve for subsequent discussion the deeper implications of this question. For now, we offer the suggestion that Jesus recognized from his study of the Old Testament prophecies that it was God's will for the Messiah to suffer and die as the vicarious atonement for mankind. This is what was pictured in the offering of the paschal lamb and indeed in a more general way by all the animal sacrifices that had been brought to Jehovah. In no other way could Jesus approach the hour of destiny except by refusing to ask for divine intervention and by accepting the cross.

Jesus himself reflected deeply upon his final circumstances: ***"The hour is come,"*** he said, ***"that the Son of man should be glorified ... Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."*** (John 12:23,27) Again, the purpose of his life was revealed in an earlier statement: ***"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom [sacrifice] for many."*** (Mark 10:45) His determination to be faithful to his mission was evident in his words: ***"I have set my face like a flint: The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"*** Isa. 50:7, John 18:11

In his final moments, many of the pertinent Old Testament prophecies must have flashed through his mind to provide strength and resoluteness of purpose:

***"He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ... For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren ... For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me ... Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor: mine adversaries are all before thee.***

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***“Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Isa. 53:3, Psalm 69:7-9, 19-21***

***"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."***

***“He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken away by distress and judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”***

***“Yet it pleased the LORD [Yahweh purposed – Rotherham] to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Isa. 53:4-12***

How strange it must have appeared, and to this day continues so in the minds of many, for the Lord's Anointed to be required to humble himself in this manner! He who was destined to rule the nations ***"with a rod of iron"*** and to have dominion ***"from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"*** (Psalm 2:9, 72:8), was first required to suffer and die at the hands of those he came to bless. ***"How unsearchable are [God's] judgments, and His ways past finding out!"*** Rom. 11:33

Thus it was that Jesus' life ebbed away on the cross until his sacrifice was fully consummated. He ***"gave himself a ransom [sacrifice] for all, to be testified in due time."*** (1 Tim. 2:6) On Golgotha's awesome site in the rugged hills of Judea, the grand purpose of Messiah's first coming was now realized.



## **VII. ESTABLISHING THE TIME OF MESSIAH'S APPEARANCE: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ASTRONOMY, HISTORY, AND THE BIBLE.**

Although all scholars are agreed that the life of Jesus of Nazareth is a historical certainty, it is quite another matter to find any unanimity on the exact year of his appearance. Estimates of the year of his birth commonly vary from about B.C. 9 to A.D. 6, and estimates of the start of his ministry show similar variation. Part of the problem has been the belief that all inquiry in this area was virtually limited to the New Testament for source materials. We propose here to enlarge these sources to include chronological data from the Old Testament bearing upon the Messiah of prophecy and also to utilize the Passover type which amplifies the teachings of the Gospels. Combining this testimony with some helpful tie-in points from astronomy and history will furnish us with surprisingly precise and harmonious data which, for the most part, seem to have eluded the attention of authorities in the field.

*Astronomy's Guidelines.* This approach begins by noting the unanimous teaching of the Gospels that Jesus died on a Friday (the day before the Jewish Sabbath). By adding to this the teaching of the Passover type in regard to the 14th day (which agrees with John's Gospel), the crucifixion day is identified as Friday, the 14th of Nisan. This information becomes very significant, since such a combination is a relatively rare occurrence; that is to say, the 14th of Nisan seldom falls on a Friday. Let us see how this has proved useful in establishing the exact secular year of Jesus' death.

"According to John 19:14 the crucifixion was on the day of Preparation for the Passover, which doubtless means the 14th of Nisan, when the paschal lamb was slain ... All four Gospels also place the crucifixion on a Friday, that day being followed by the sabbath and it by the first day of the week. The chronological problem, therefore, is to ascertain in what year, in the range of years which comes in question, the 14th of Nisan fell on a Friday. By astronomical calculation this was the case in A.D. 30 and A.D. 33. In A.D. 30, Nisan 14 was Friday, April 7; in A. D. 33 it was Friday, April 3."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, footnote, p.328.

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This expression by Finegan represents a fair summary of the thinking which prevailed for many years among authorities in this field.<sup>2</sup> It then became a question as to which of the two dates deduced was the more likely to be correct, A.D. 30 or A.D. 33. But on this matter there was little unanimity, and various lines of reasoning were employed to support one or the other date.

One such approach utilized the time relationship of the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist, based on the assertion of the Gospels that Jesus was six months younger than his cousin John. The Gospel of Luke (in Luke 3:1) then links the beginning of John's ministry with the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, which is a readily identifiable historical date, A.D. 28-29. Assuming that both John and Jesus started their public ministries at the age of full manhood under the Law--30 years--it appeared reasonable that Jesus would have followed John in this activity by six months. This would have marked Jesus' ministry as beginning in A.D. 29 or 30. Then if the length of his ministry were known, the choice between A.D. 30 and A.D. 33 for his crucifixion would become clear.

Subsequently, the above line of reasoning will be analyzed more closely and tied in with an Old Testament prophecy to reveal the exact length of Jesus' ministry. At this point, the Gospel accounts will suffice to provide an outline sketch. It has been noted that the Fourth Evangelist makes at least three separate references to the Passover during the course of describing Jesus' public preaching, as found in John 2:13, 6:4, and 11:55. (Some believe that John 5:1 is descriptive of yet a fourth Passover.) Accordingly, many Bible commentators are of the opinion that the public ministry of Jesus spanned approximately three years, and very few think it could have been much longer. Thus, the latter of the two prominent dates under question--April 3, A.D. 33--appeared the more likely to mark the date of Jesus' death.

The following excerpt offers an example of such thinking:

"According to all our sources, Jesus was crucified by order of the Procurator Pontius Pilate, who (as we know from Josephus) held office in Judea from A.D. 26-36. According to all our Gospels, the crucifixion took place on a Friday during a Passover season ... According to John it was the day before the Passover day. If John's dating be accepted ... astronomical reckoning

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<sup>2</sup>J. K. Fotheringham, in his "Astronomical Evidence for the Date of the Crucifixion," *Journal of Theological Studies* X11, (1910), p. 122, and again in his article "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," *Journal of Theological Studies* XXXV, (1934), p. 160, had earlier called attention to these dates.

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enables us to fix the date of Jesus' death on April 7, A.D. 30, or on April 3, A.D. 33. Since Luke, who was concerned with the relation of the Christian story to secular history, dates the emergence of John the Baptist as a prophet in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1)--i.e. A.D. 28-29--we can scarcely assume that Jesus began his public ministry much earlier than A.D. 30. It is therefore probable that it covered a span of three years, from A.D. 30-33"<sup>3</sup>

In very recent years, more precise astronomical data have become available which have had a stunning impact on the old issue. No longer is it necessary to speculate whether A.D. 30 or A.D. 33 is the more plausible year. More accurate computations now reveal that the 14th day of Nisan did not fall on a Friday in the year A.D. 30, but on Thursday, April 6, instead. Thus A.D. 30 is eliminated altogether as a possible year in which a coincidence of a Friday with the 14th of Nisan occurred.

Reproduced below is the latest astronomical tabulation covering a wide range of years for the possible dates of Jesus' death, according to the Julian calendar and Jerusalem time: <sup>4</sup>

**EXHIBIT G**  
**POSSIBLE DATES OF JESUS' DEATH**

Year A.D.	New Moon near Equinox	Nisan 14 Date	Nisan 14 Day of Week	Comments
26	Mar. 7	Mar. 22	Friday	Far too early
26	Apr. 6	Apr. 20	Saturday	Lacks Fri./14th match
27	Mar. 26	Apr. 10	Thursday	" "
28	Mar. 15	Mar. 29	Monday	" "
29	Apr. 2	Apr. 17	Sunday	" "
30	Mar. 22	Apr. 6	Thursday	" "
31	Mar. 12	Mar. 26	Monday	" "
32	Mar. 29	Apr. 13	Sunday	" "
33	Mar. 19	Apr. 3	Friday	Most likely date
34	Mar. 9	Mar. 23	Tuesday	Lacks Fri./14th match
34	Apr. 7	Apr. 22	Thursday	" "
35	Mar. 28	Apr. 11	Monday	" "

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<sup>3</sup>Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Jesus Christ," p. 481.

<sup>4</sup> Data taken from Herman H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1651*, pp. 86-87, and Roger Rusk, *Christianity Today*, XVIII.,13, (1974) "The Day He Died," p. 6.

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As shown in **Exhibit G**, there is a possibility that Nisan 14 fell on a Friday in the year A.D. 26. However, that date is far too early as a likely choice for Jesus' crucifixion. As already shown, John the Baptist's ministry did not even begin until the year A.D. 28-29 and Jesus' preaching work started after that. As is clearly evident, the only remaining plausible date for the death of Jesus, based on Nisan 14 falling on a Friday, is April 3 in 33 A.D.

In this initial approach to establish the time of Messiah's appearance, it will be seen that the Friday-14th day combination has been effectively utilized and related to secular history by astronomical calculation. The 33 A.D. result depends largely on information supplied by the Gospels as supported by the Passover type. But it should be asked, is this year credible when the Old Testament is taken into account, with its own specific time prophecy relating to the coming of Messiah? For our confidence in any date to be fully established, we would want the harmonious testimony of all the Scriptures bearing on the subject. Let us determine, then, if this is the case when the Old Testament contribution is considered.

**A Comprehensive Old Testament Prophecy.** Although completely removed from the setting of the Passover, type or antitype, the following evidence is provided to round out the Bible's own testimony on the exact time of Messiah's appearance. Our Jewish readers will find this approach of special interest because it is based solely upon an Old Testament prophecy which specifically concerns itself with "Messiah the Prince." In view of the prophetic evidence considered earlier which found such precise fulfillment in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, this additional chronological testimony is of great consequence.

The total evidence herein to be presented consists of but a single prophecy in the ninth chapter of Daniel which, for the most part, has eluded the attention of contemporary Bible commentators. Nonetheless, it is a prophecy so comprehensive that it furnishes data on the year of the Messiah's birth, the length of his earthly ministry, and the year of his death. It is with the latter points that we shall be especially concerned.

Turning now to this remarkable prophecy, we read:

***"Understand the matter, and consider the vision: Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [69 weeks] ...***

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***“And after [the seven,] threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself ... And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation [offering] to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate...” Dan. 9:23-27***

We do not here propose to consider all the facets of this prophecy, but will limit ourselves to a brief discussion of the time features.<sup>5</sup> We believe that Daniel was being provided with a preview of a special period which would mark the history of his people Israel--a period of 70 weeks of favor. It was to consist of 69 weeks to the coming of the Messiah and one final week in which the covenant would be confirmed with Israel. In the midst of the final week, Messiah would be cut off, and at its conclusion desolation would set in.

It is upon the basis of this prophecy that in two separate lines of reasoning it is possible to establish the year of Messiah's appearance. To begin with, in order to gain an understanding of the time features of this prophecy, we need to abide by a Scriptural-given key for unlocking certain time prophecies of this kind. It is found in *Ezekiel 4:6*, ***"I have appointed thee each day for a year."*** This suggestion has been recognized by many Bible students as indicating that the 70 weeks or 490 days of this prophecy are symbolic days, which when converted to literal years equal a period of 490 years, "a year for a day." Thus, this prophecy was previewing a 490-year period in the history of the Jewish people.

It is interesting to note that the American Translation, the Revised Standard Version, and that of Moffatt all render the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 as "seventy weeks of years." This suggests that a much longer period of time is involved than merely a matter of literal weeks, as indeed a study of the events of the prophecy bears out.

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<sup>5</sup> For a thorough analysis of Daniel 9:23-27, see Russell, *The Time Is At Hand*, pp. 63-72.

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The starting point of this period was given as the going forth of a decree, "**to restore and build Jerusalem.**" This decree was issued to the Jewish statesman Nehemiah by King Artaxerxes I. of ancient Persia, granting him permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which had fallen into a state of disrepair after the desolation of the city, about 607 B.C. This ruined state of the walls continued even after the restoration, about 537 B.C. and thereafter. According to Nehemiah 2:1-8, the decree to rebuild was granted in the 20th year of the reign of King Artaxerxes: but the intriguing question arises, what year was that? While there is some difference of opinion among chronologists, there is ample testimony fixing this event in the year 455 B.C.<sup>6</sup> This year, then, becomes the starting point for the 490 year span of Daniel's prophecy.

According to the prophecy, 69 (symbolic) weeks were marked out to reach unto Messiah the Prince, that is, to the year when the long-sought Jewish Messiah would appear in his official role as the Anointed One of Jehovah. Sixty-nine weeks are composed of 483 days; converting symbolic days to literal years gives us a period of 483 years. Adding 483 years to the 455 B.C. date (and compensating for the lack of a zero year between 1 B. C. and A.D. 1) brings us to 29 A.D., the year in which the Messiah was to be manifested. See Exhibit H, "Seventy Weeks of Daniel's Prophecy," which follows.

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<sup>6</sup>The exact year of the ascension of King Artaxerxes I. (Longimanus) to the throne is in dispute. Two schools of thought have arisen: the first, and currently the most widely accepted, places his date at 464 B.C., and hence the 20th year of the reign of the king in 445 B.C.; the second, less widely held but including many noted scholars of past and present, identifies the first year of the King as 474 B.C., and the 20th year in which the decree was issued as the year 455 B.C.

The dispute is of sufficient importance for us to trace its background as follows: Chronologists begin with a point of agreement that the year King Xerxes, the father and predecessor of Artaxerxes, ascended the throne was 485 B.C. However, opinions then differ as to the length of his reign, which in turn affects the start of his son's reign and the date of the crucial 20th year. Ptolemy's Canon assigns 21 years to Xerxes' reign and has been widely followed; yet it was not compiled until about six centuries after Xerxes and is in disagreement with earlier historians, especially Thucydides, who limit Xerxes' reign to 11 years.

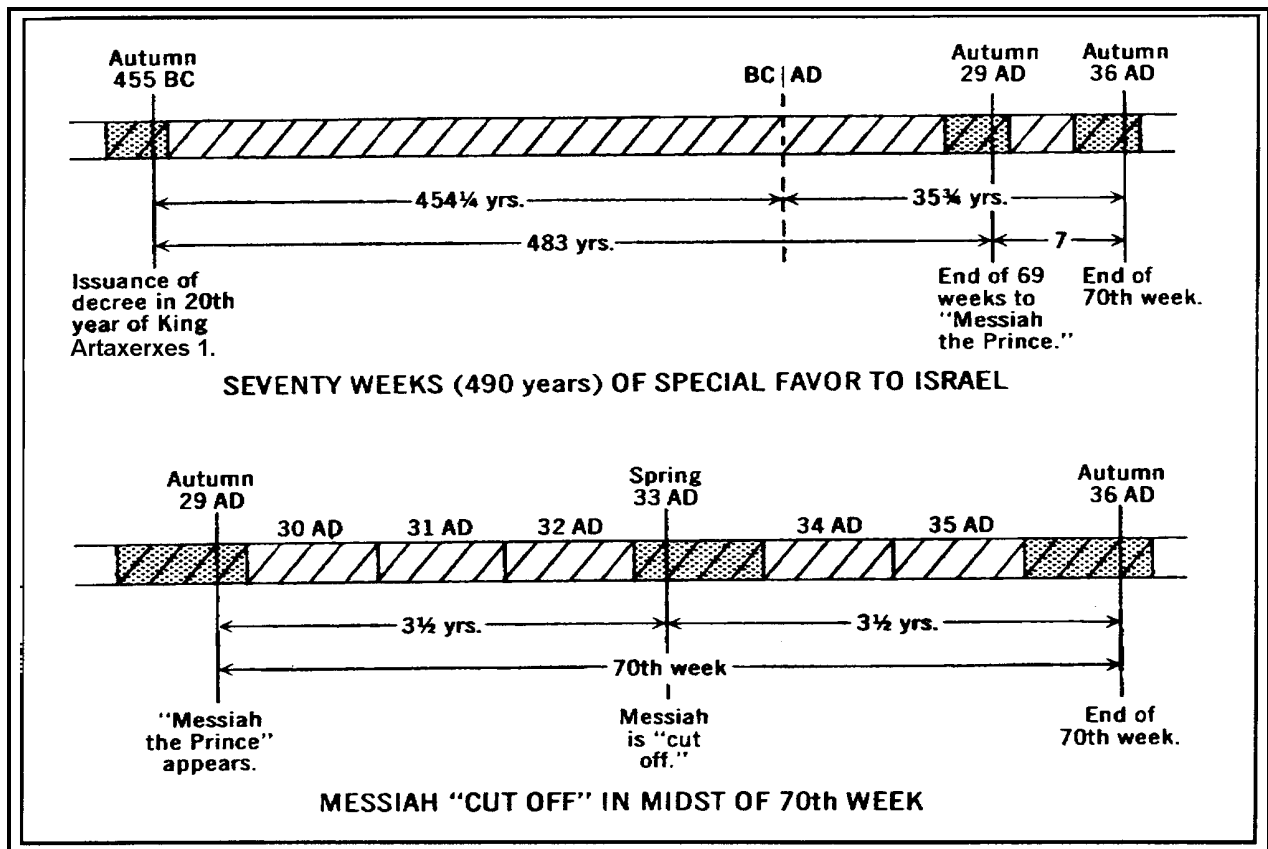
Thucydides, a Greek historian universally regarded as a most exact chronicler, was a contemporary of Artaxerxes and lived during his reign. His statements are supported by the historian Charon, also a contemporary of Artaxerxes, and Nepos, a Roman historian of the 1st century B.C. It was Nepos who observed that Thucydides lived nearest in point of time to the events under question and therefore should be given the greater weight. In the 1st century A.D., Plutarch expressed his confidence in Thucydides and Charon. In more recent times, Fynes Clinton (1781-1851) voiced the then almost unanimous reliance upon Thucydides: "Thucydides is allowed the praise above all historians of being scrupulously exact and accurate."

On the other side of the dispute, the earliest known writer to have dissented from Thucydides was Euphorus, who lived more than a hundred years after Xerxes. (Footnote continued on next page)

The Time of Messiah's Appearance

## EXHIBIT H

### SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL'S PROPHECY (Dan. 9:23-27)



It is thought that he did so quite accidentally, by confusing Artaxerxes' name in the manuscript for that of his father. The first writer of modern times to conclude that the 20th year of Artaxerxes was 445 B.C., was apparently Henry Dodwell, (1641-1711). It is thought that he, too, did so quite accidentally, by misreading a passage in Isocrates' *Panatheniakos*, which he used in compiling his own work, *Annals of Thucydides*.

Dodwell's deductions have since been thoroughly refuted by Vitranga (1659-1722), by Krueger (1838), and especially by Ernst W. Hengstenberg in *Christology of the Old Testament*, (1839). Despite these treatises, Dodwell's view and the authority of Ptolemy's Canon has persisted in most scholarly circles and continues to dominate today. (Footnote continued on next page)

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Here, then, is a remarkable prediction of the very year that the Messiah was due to appear on the scene, hidden in the time symbolism of an Old Testament prophecy. Few Bible scholars are aware of its import, and some mistakenly have applied it to our day and attempt to use it to define the length of Antichrist's reign at the end of the age. Yet the facts of the matter have been faithfully recorded by Daniel, awaiting their uncovering and correct application by the sincere inquirer for truth.

Daniel's prophecy is thus seen to agree precisely with the findings of the previous section which utilized astronomical calculation to call attention to 33 A.D. and a Biblical-historical reference point to lead to 29 A.D. Such united testimony would seem to strongly confirm that the predicted appearance of "*Messiah the Prince*" was indeed fulfilled in the anointing and baptism of Jesus at the hands of John. Those familiar with the Gospel narration will recall that the baptism of Jesus at the River Jordan marked the occasion of his receiving the Holy Spirit and was accompanied by a descending dove and voice from heaven, saying: "*Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*" (Luke 3:22) Thus was Jesus officially anointed of Jehovah to carry out the work of redeeming Israel and all mankind.

Earlier it was noted that many Bible commentators believe Jesus' ministry to have been three years or so in length. Others have offered a slightly wider leeway, suggesting a length of 2 to 4 years. But Daniel's prophecy, which we have now been considering, goes beyond just approximating the duration of this period: it furnishes us with the exact time involved.

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Other scholars who uphold 455 B.C. as the correct date for the 20th year of Artaxerxes directly or indirectly in their writings) are:

Cicero (106-43 B.C. )

St. Jerome (264-340 A. D. )

James Usher, *Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, (1650).

Charles Rollin, *Ancient History of the Medes and Persians*, (1730).

Joseph Priestly, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, (about 1780).

William Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology*, (1830).

For a thorough discussion of this phase of the problem, see Edgars' *Great Pyramid Passages*, Vol. 2, Section LIX --"The Twentieth Year of Artaxerxes," pp. 295-306, and *Aid to Bible Understanding*, "Artaxerxes," pp. 136-137.

In more recent times, scholars have attempted to use certain commercial tablets and scrolls bearing on the reigns of the Persian kings to help them in setting forth an exact chronology for this period. These are not official historical records pertaining to the rules of the various kings, for such have thus far not been uncovered. These writings refer merely to an incident or transaction that took place ostensibly in a given year of a particular king's reign, without giving an overall framework which would relate the individual reigns to each other. Accordingly, there is much surmising and deduction necessary in piecing these records together, with the result somewhat analogous to a quilt-pattern that does not quite match in precise detail.(Footnote continued on next page)



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Let us recall that a description of one week was given in which a "**Covenant**" would be confirmed with many. We believe this Covenant has reference to the period of favor marked off for the nation of Israel, consisting of the 70 prophetic weeks. In the midst of the last week of this Covenant of favor, the sacrifice was to cease and "**Messiah [was to] be cut off.**" This last prophetic week consisted of 7 symbolic days, representing 7 literal years, and began to count with Messiah's anointing as "**Prince**"; in the midst of this period, 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years would have elapsed. Thus, Messiah was to be cut off or slain 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years after his anointing, which would be 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years after 29 A.D., bringing us to the year 33 A.D. (See **Exhibit H**, "Seventy Weeks of Daniel's Prophecy.")

This prophecy alone, then, with an assist from secular history, furnishes us with the date of Jesus' anointing as the Messiah, the length of his ministry, and the date of his crucifixion.

**A New Testament Confirmation.** Still another line of reasoning can be pursued to arrive at the year of Jesus' death. This approach utilizes the age relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist, as briefly mentioned earlier. It then relates this information with the latter part of Daniel's prophecy which, as we have just seen, depicts the length of Jesus' ministry as 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years. It is completely independent of the 455 B.C. date for Nehemiah's commission and thus bypasses any controversy that might exist on the validity of assigning that year for the event.

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The usual interpretation of these tablets, based on a very few which mention the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes I., is that they favor Ptolemy's Canon and the 445 B.C. date for the latter king's 20th year. However, because of the wide range of uncertainties in dealing with such records, these conclusions cannot be considered as absolute. See *Aid to Bible Understanding*, "Chronology," pp. 322-333, for an excellent insight into the problems encountered in attempting to use commercial tablets and scrolls as evidence in setting forth a consistent chronological scheme, and pp. 328-330 in particular for the ambiguities of the Persian tablets bearing on the end of Xerxes' rule and the beginning of that of Artaxerxes.

In fact, there is at least one cuneiform text (reproduced in *The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania*, Series A: Cuneiform Texts, edited by H. V. Hilprecht, Vol. VIII., Part I., by Albert T. Clay, 1908, published by Department of Archaeology, University of Pennsylvania) which supports the longer reign of Artaxerxes, identifying the accession year of his successor (Darius II.) as the 51st year. This tablet would thus substantiate 455 B.C. as the 20th year of Artaxerxes, the year in which Nehemiah's decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem was issued. Most scholars, however, have rejected this text as a "scribal error" and favor instead two other tablets giving a shorter length for Artaxerxes' reign. And thus the dispute continues.  
(End of Footnote)

The Time of Messiah's Appearance

Let us turn first to Luke 1:26 and 1:36, where we are informed that John the Baptist was conceived six months ahead of Jesus, making him just six months older than him. This indicates that Jesus' entrance into the ministry, which incidentally is expressly stated to have occurred when he was (about) thirty years of age (Luke 3:23), was delayed six months after John's. (The Jewish custom prevented any from beginning earlier than age thirty [Num. 4:3] and there is no reason to believe that either Jesus or John delayed after reaching this age.)

We shall first use this information to determine the seasons of the year marking the beginning of John's and Jesus' ministries, respectively. We know that Jesus died at the Passover time, which occurs in the spring of the year about April 1st, whatever the actual year. Since his ministry began 3-1/2 years earlier, as previously shown from Daniel 9:27, Jesus must have embarked upon his ministry in the autumn of the year, about October 1st, whatever the actual year. And since 6 months of age separated Jesus from John, John's ministry must have begun six months earlier, in the spring of that year. Thus we observe that it was in the same year that both began their ministries: John in the spring, and Jesus in the autumn.

Turning next to the Gospel of Luke, we read the following concerning John the Baptist:

***"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee ... Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Luke 3:1-4***

John the Baptist's ministry is stated to have begun *"in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar."* This now becomes our point of reference to secular history, and this date has been established as the year 29 A.D. There is general agreement amongst historians that A.D. 14 marked the commencement of Tiberius Caesar's reign, upon the death of Caesar Augustus: on August 19th of that year.<sup>7</sup> The 15th year of Tiberius' reign would thus have been from August A.D. 28 to August A.D. 29. And the spring of this period, the season when John the Baptist began to preach, would have fallen in the year A.D. 29.

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<sup>7</sup>Salmon, Edward T., *A History of the Roman World From 30 B.C. to A.D. 138*, pp. 38,123-127; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Tiberius," XXII., 178.

The Time of Messiah's Appearance

John's ministry, then, began in the year 29 A.D., in the spring as noted earlier. But we already have deduced that Jesus' ministry began in the same year as John's, in the autumn. Thus we now have pinpointed Jesus' anointing as the Messiah as having commenced in the autumn of A.D. 29. By adding to this the 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years of Daniel 9:27, the exact length of his earthly ministry, we are again brought to the year A.D. 33, in the spring, marking the crucifixion and death of Christ.

Incidentally, accepting the reasonable assumption that Jesus entered the period of his ministry immediately upon reaching the age of 30, as previously discussed, now permits a ready calculation of the exact date of his birth. If the start of his ministry was in the autumn of A.D. 29, his birth just 30 years earlier must have occurred in the autumn of B.C. 2.<sup>8</sup> (This calculation takes into account the absence of a zero year between A.D. 1 and B.C. 1.)

In summing up, we can see that the Bible itself furnishes the primary information needed to establish the essential dates relating to the life of Messiah. Notice how astronomy and secular history combine with the types, prophecies, and other teachings of the Bible to make such a chronological solution possible. What remarkable harmony from such diverse fields of study! With these three separate lines of testimony harmonizing so completely, we believe the time of Messiah's first coming is established and verified beyond any reasonable doubt.

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<sup>8</sup>Such a date for the birth of Christ is in close agreement with the findings of a majority of early Christian historians and chronologers who lived from the second to the sixth centuries, and even later. These include Julius Africanus, the *Chronicon Cyprianicum*, Zonaras (Greek), Bar Hebraeus (quoting Syrian, Armenian, and Greek sources), and the *Chronicon Edessenum* (Syrian). In addition, almost all the early Christian Fathers whose writings have come down to us favor either a 3 B.C. or 2 B.C. date. Included here are Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Orosius, Cassiodorus Senator, Hippolytus of Rome, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Hippolytus of Thebes, Photius (Patriarch of Constantinople), and Epiphanius.

The writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., can be variously interpreted in respect to this matter. He records that Herod died shortly after an eclipse of the moon and before a Passover. Most contemporary scholars have associated this event with the lunar eclipse of March 12-13, 4 B.C. Since the Bible states that Christ was born while Herod was yet alive, this appeared to be strong circumstantial evidence that the birth occurred before that eclipse in March of 4 B.C. However, recent historical studies have thrown doubt on the association of Herod's death with that particular eclipse. These studies favor a later eclipse that occurred in 1 B.C., and thus would harmonize nicely with a 2 or 3 B.C. date for the birth of Christ.

(See Ernest L. Martin, "The Celestial Pageantry Dating Christ's Birth," *Christianity Today*, XXI., 5, Dec. 3, 1976.)

## VIII. RELATED CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Several matters related to the time features of the Passover remain to be discussed. Considerable confusion seems to attend any study where time relationships are involved, and this seems particularly true in respect to the Passover, type and antitype. However, with a background into this area now well established, we are in a more favorable position to tackle some of the problems yet remaining.

We will begin by noting a contrast in the Jewish and Christian attitudes toward the Passover and the resultant effects upon their respective beliefs and practices. This will lead to an examination of the propriety of certain Christian customs springing from, or closely related to, the Passover. And finally, an effort will be made to harmonize an apparent discrepancy in the Gospel accounts regarding the timing of Jesus' celebration of his last Passover meal.

***Jewish vs. Christian Emphasis.*** Originally, as we have seen, Jehovah God commanded that the Passover rite be observed as an ordinance forever (Exod. 12:24). His charge to the heads of the Jewish households gave rise to the ritual which has endeared itself to every Jewish heart. (See Exod. 12:26-27) From earliest times, faithful Jews have recounted the story of the plagues and the Exodus to their children, accompanying the eating of the paschal lamb. Whereas the lamb was slain on the 14th day of Nisan, the emphasis was always given to the proceedings on the Passover Day proper, that is, on the 15th day, commencing with the eating of the lamb.

In modern times, the Jewish home celebration remains basically the same, including the reading of the Haggadah (story of the original Passover), except that the slaughtering of the lamb is omitted. Consequently, there is now even less concern about the 14th day; the current Jewish calendar does not indicate it to be of any significance.

The traditional Jewish emphasis on the 15th day is quite readily understandable. As we have seen, it was on this day that the paschal lamb was originally eaten, that the firstborn were passed

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over, and that the Exodus commenced. According to the Scriptures (Exod. 12:17 and Num. 33:1,3), it was on this same day that the actual departure from Egypt was accomplished. No wonder the Lord commanded that the Israelites were to observe this day as an ordinance forever, and to keep it as a holy convocation upon which no servile work was to be performed! Exod. 12:14

In contrast to this, Christian students of the Bible who appreciate the vital place which the Passover holds in their theology, are mainly concerned with the 14th day. It was on this day that Jesus died as the grand antitypical paschal lamb, indelibly marking this date as the most memorable in the history of the world. It was on this day also that Jesus instituted the "Lord's Supper," an occasion of such importance in the Christian faith that it is equaled only by "Baptism" as a fundamental rite.

There is clear evidence that in the early Christian church, the 14th day of Nisan carried special significance.<sup>1</sup> It was the one day which Jesus' followers were anxious to hold dear, a practice which was most exceptional since there is no record of any other occasion being considered "sacred" or enjoined as a "holy day." Thus, for perhaps a century or more, there was but one such occasion which, from the very start, carried with it great depth of meaning and solemnity: the annual observance of the death of Jesus in the simple ceremony of the "Lord's Supper."

As will be shown, this emphasis of the early Christians in commemorating the death of Jesus gradually diminished. Through the passing of the years and the elaborate development of ritual and doctrine which followed, many other "holy" days appeared: Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, various saints' days, and others began to come into prominence and all but replaced the earlier practice. We will not here evaluate the merits of these additional religious days and their associated festivities, nor examine the reasons these were introduced into the Christian faith. But it is worthy of noting that all such were nonexistent in the early church, where the sole emphasis lay in commemorating the death of Jesus on an annual basis.

Today there exist only minority Christian groups who have retained the simplicity of the early faith and continue to place the emphasis on the 14th day. Among such, there is also an awareness of the significance of the 15th day of Nisan, although it is no longer possible for them to partake of the typical Jewish Passover meal or enter into its festivities. None who have accepted Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> See discussion to follow under the heading of "Passover and Easter."

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Christ as the antitype of the paschal lamb can with propriety continue to commemorate the type. Nevertheless, the 15th day still carries with it the backdrop of God's majestic dealings with His people of old, and, as will yet be shown, presents a picture of the future deliverance of mankind.

Let us now summarize the practice of those present day minority Christian groups who still give an annual emphasis to the commemoration of Jesus' death in the observance of the "Lord's Supper." Essentially, such believers are endeavoring to do two things: First, to focus attention upon the "Lamb of God" on the exact day on which he died; and second, to partake of the emblems of the meal on the same relative part of the 14th day (by Jewish reckoning) as Jesus did in the upper room--at the beginning, just after sunset.

***Timing of Passover and Last Supper.*** In the Christian world today, much confusion has developed over the rite of the "Lord's Supper" and the meaning attached to Jesus' words spoken at the original meal. Wide differences of interpretation have sprung up, particularly between Catholic and Protestant groups. But even in Protestant denominations, where the occasion is mainly regarded as a memorial of the death of Jesus, there is considerable deviation in the frequency with which it is celebrated. Some observe it weekly, monthly, or quarterly, while others hold it every four months, semi-annually, or annually, depending upon the denominational regulation or local custom.

It would not be appropriate here for us to enter into a doctrinal discussion of the correct understanding of this rite as taught in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> But we do think that the relationship of the "Lord's Supper" to the Passover is sufficiently clear to offer a direct clue to the proper time observance of the event. It might not be amiss, therefore, to briefly examine this relationship and to consider the New Testament's testimony on the subject.

We have learned that in Jewish tradition, grounded in the law of Moses, it was proper to celebrate the Passover once each year, in the first month of Nisan (Abib). It was on such an occasion, just after Jesus and his disciples had eaten the Passover meal, that Jesus initiated the new ceremony. To his immediate disciples, and to all who would subsequently become his

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<sup>2</sup>For an exceptionally clear presentation of the true spiritual significance of the "Lord's Supper," see Russell, "The Passover of the New Creation," Chapter XI. of *The New Creation*, Vol. 6 of "Studies in the Scriptures" series, pp.457-484.

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followers, he said: "**This do in remembrance of me.**" (1 Cor. 11:24) The strong implication was that, for the Christian, this new ceremony was now meant to replace the old. The antitype of the lamb having appeared and having offered himself in sacrifice, it would no longer be appropriate for believers in Jesus to continue celebrating the type. Rather, henceforth it was their privilege to commemorate the death of the true "**Lamb of God,**" of which the paschal offering was but a foregleam.

But how often would it be appropriate to hold this commemoration and to participate in the "Lord's Supper"? We think there is no valid reason to alter the generally accepted practice used in commemorating the death of any individual or dignitary--once per year, on the anniversary date of his death. Certainly this appears to be the strong teaching of the Passover type, wherein the lamb was slain and eaten as part of an annual ceremony.

In accordance with this thought, some Christian groups prefer to use the title "Memorial Supper" in describing the ceremony which Jesus instituted. It is felt that such a title is perhaps more suitable because it indicates its purpose: it was designed primarily to be a memorial of the death of the founder of Christianity.

There are several New Testament Scriptures which relate Jesus of Nazareth to the Jewish Passover picture. Perhaps the simplest and most direct is the Apostle Paul's statement, "**For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.**" (1 Cor. 5:7) Peter and John the Baptist both linked the sacrifice of Christ with the slaying of a lamb: "**Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and spot.**" (1 Peter 1:18, 19); "**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**" (John 1:29) And finally, as we have already seen, John in his fourth Gospel identified the day of Jesus' death as that of the 14th of Nisan, the "Day of Preparation," when the typical lambs were slain in the Temple.

With this New Testament tie-in, we think the lesson of the Passover is very forceful in pointing out the correct time observance of the Memorial. If, as we believe, Jesus intended the new rite to replace the old, it would seem only logical that the timing of the new was meant to remain identical with the old. Since such an annual observance is Scripturally indicated, both from the type and the New Testament implications, many Bible students have adopted this as

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their regular, practice. Notwithstanding the more frequent observances which have become commonplace in most churches, such Bible students have found that their celebration has taken on a much deeper meaning and a more reverential aspect. For them, an annual observance becomes the highlight of the entire year, serving also as the occasion to renew their consecration to God and their willingness to share in the sufferings of Christ.

**Jesus' Last Passover.** Another problem which presents itself has to do with possible irregularities in the timing of Jesus' final Passover celebration. In the normal sequence of events, the paschal lambs were slain in the temple toward the close of the 14th day and prepared for eating immediately thereafter. Shortly after nightfall, the 15th day having commenced (by Jewish reckoning), the lambs were fully roasted and the Passover meal ready to begin. But if Jesus died at the very same hour that the lambs were slain--about 3 P.M. on the 14th--how could he have partaken of his final Passover meal with his own disciples at the accustomed time--after nightfall on the 15th? A little reflection on this matter brings out the obvious incongruity.

The following observations and suggestions of authorities seem helpful in this regard:

"If ... Jesus died a few hours before the beginning of the Passover celebration, Jesus' last meal with his disciples ... would have been ... eaten 24 hours before the Jews ate their unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and paschal lamb."<sup>3</sup>

"There can be no doubt from the account that our Lord and his disciples ate the Passover Supper on the day preceding the one on which the Jews in general ate it; for in John's Gospel we read that when our Lord was before Pilate in the Judgment Hall, which was after he had eaten the Passover, the Pharisees, his accusers, had not yet eaten it--nor would they eat it until the evening after his crucifixion."<sup>4</sup>

"It seems likely that the Last Supper was a passover meal held ahead of the official observance and that, as John represents, Jesus died on the day when the passover lambs were slain ..."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>James Hastings, ed., "Jesus Christ," *Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 487-488.

<sup>4</sup>Charles T. Russell, "The Lord's Supper," *Tower Reprints* (1901), p. 2771.

<sup>5</sup>Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, pp. 596-597.



Related Chronological Problems

Three possible suggestions are offered by Finegan, a Biblical scholar, to explain why Jesus ate the Passover meal earlier than was customary: First, that Jesus might have followed a variation from the standard Jewish calendar, one termed "Qumran"; second, that he might have followed the practice of reckoning the day from morning to morning instead of from evening to evening; and third, "it always remains possible that it was simply by deliberate choice and in view of the ominous developments of those days that Jesus moved his observance of the passover ahead one day."<sup>6</sup>

It is the consensus of these observers, then, that Jesus scheduled the Passover meal one day ahead of the usual time. In view of the evidence already presented, pinpointing the hour of Jesus' death as having occurred just prior to the Jewish Passover meal, such a conclusion appears to be the only logical one that can be drawn.

Jesus was fully aware of the schemes of the authorities to slay him. Though unable to control the exact time of his betrayal and death, he knew all too well what must soon befall him. But before the inevitable occurred, Jesus wanted once more to commemorate the Passover with his own disciples. He said, "***With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer.***" (Luke 22:15) If Jesus knew his death was near at hand, and if he had reason to believe it would occur on the 14th of Nisan, his only alternative was to arrange for an earlier commemoration of the Passover.

However, in fairness to all the facts which might be brought forth, we need to examine three Scriptures which seem to contradict this conclusion. They are found in Mark 14:12, Luke 22:7, and Matthew 26:17. The first text reads:

***"And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city ... And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover." Mark 14:12***

The second passage, in Luke, is almost identical with this. The third, which is the Matthew account, is similar, in that it speaks of the first day of unleavened bread, but omits the phrase, "***when the passover (lamb) was killed.***"

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

*Related Chronological Problems*

If we accept these texts as giving a literal and exact indication of the time involved, we would receive the impression that Jesus and his disciples partook of the Passover meal at the accustomed time, immediately after the slaughtering of the lambs in the Temple. This would then imply that Jesus was crucified on the Passover Day itself (the 15th), rather than on the Day of Preparation (the 14th). Since this places these texts in opposition to John's Gospel and also places them out of harmony with the type, how should we consider them?

There are at least two possible ways of harmonizing the apparent discrepancy between the Synoptic Gospel accounts and John's record. Finegan suggests one solution that is based upon alternate ways of reckoning the day which may have prevailed at that period.<sup>7</sup> The usual Jewish reckoning counted the day as beginning at sunset, or six o'clock in the evening. This undoubtedly was the official manner of reckoning and was followed by John in his gospel. It places the Last Supper in the evening (beginning) of the 14th day (close to midnight) and the crucifixion near the close of this day (about 3 o'clock in the afternoon).

But there was another way of reckoning the day which may have prevailed at a much earlier period and possibly was still in use to some extent in Jesus' day. This alternate method counted the days as beginning at sunrise (rather than sunset), and may have been the one employed in the Synoptic Gospel accounts in question. (It should be noted that such a sunrise to sunrise day is still different from our modern way of reckoning, which begins and ends the day at midnight.) By this way of counting time, the Last Supper would have occurred in the evening (near the end) of the 14th day and the crucifixion at 3 P.M. of the 15th, near the middle of that day.

These two methods of reckoning are compared in **Exhibit I** which follows, entitled, "Timing of the Last Supper and Crucifixion." Notice how Finegan's suggestion neatly harmonizes the otherwise divergent accounts of the Synoptic Gospels on the one hand, and John's Gospel on the other. By following the ancient sunrise to sunrise method of reckoning the day, Jesus and his disciples could have partaken of the meal one day ahead of the usual Jewish time while fully satisfying the chronological requirements of the Synoptic accounts. A seeming drawback of such an arrangement, however, is that it places both the slaying of the lamb and its eating in one 24 hour period designated the 14th day, whereas under the requirements of the Law, these were to be distinct activities occurring on separate days.

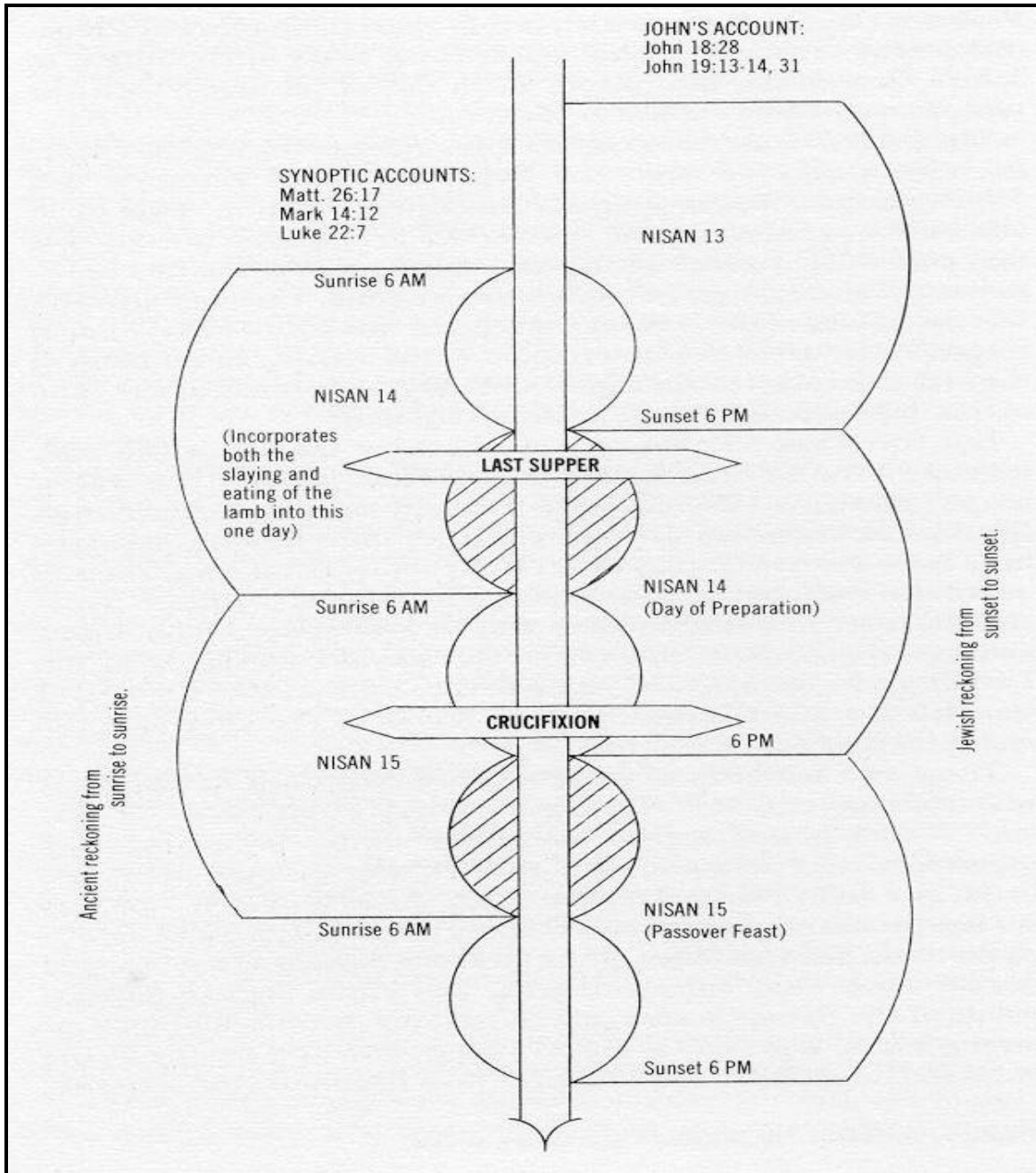
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<sup>7</sup>Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 290.

# EXHIBIT I

## TIMING OF LAST SUPPER AND CRUCIFIXION

Harmonizing John's Gospel with the Synoptics



Related Chronological Problems

There is another, much simpler way of striking harmony in these accounts: it assumes that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were more concerned with the spiritual truths of the occasion than with providing a detailed account of the time features involved. Their writing, in this view, was intended to be only in broad terms, sketching the main stream of events. Their intent was to show in a general way that the season of unleavened bread, when the lambs were to be slain, was almost upon them; how, then, did the Master wish them to prepare for the Passover?

John's Gospel, on the other hand, was largely concerned with the final days and hours of Jesus' ministry. The time aspect for John was very important and he went to great lengths to indicate clearly and precisely when the various events occurred. There is no question that he established the 14th day as the one on which Jesus was crucified. This harmonizes perfectly with the type. Thus we believe that his testimony was specially provided to clarify this final phase of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Somewhat related to this problem is an objection that is raised pertaining to the authority of Jesus for thus altering the time of the Passover celebration. This line of reasoning first affirms that Jehovah God established the exact timing of the Passover as a type or picture of the Messiah who was to come. Each year for centuries, with some notable exceptions and lapses, the Israelites scrupulously carried out this rite, commemorating it exactly on time. With what authority, then, did Jesus, in the final year of his ministry, rearrange the timing of the event to make it fit into the pattern of his few remaining hours?

To those schooled in orthodox Christian dogma, there is no particular problem here, since there is an assumption of the basic oneness "in substance" of Jehovah God and Jesus the Messiah in accordance with the doctrine of the Trinity. This would permit an arbitrary relaxation of Divine Law whenever needed by Jesus, since he was both God and man, and hence the Lawgiver Himself. However, no Jewish scholar has ever found support in the Hebrew Scriptures for the concept of a triune God, consisting of Jehovah the Head, Messiah the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all as equal and coeternal beings. It must also be stated here that many conscientious Christians, while recognizing Jesus as the Son of God, likewise have noted the total lack of Scriptural support for such a concept. The word "trinity" and all of the technical terms deemed essential to a clear statement of this doctrine are conspicuously absent from the New Testament records.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>For a complete examination of the relationship of the Father and the Son, and the identity of the Holy Spirit, we recommend a careful study of Charles T. Russell's work, *The Atonement Between God and Man*, *Studies in the Scriptures Series, Vol.5*, pp.33-300.

Related Chronological Problems

The solution of this matter is quite simple when seen from God's viewpoint: As the Scripture states, "**Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.**" (Acts 15:18) His foreknowledge enabled Him to know precisely when the Lamb of God would be offered up to complete his sacrifice. As already noted, the year 33 A.D. was marked out prophetically as the one in which Messiah would be "cut off" as the reality of all the paschal sacrifices. With the antitype thus due to commence in the death of Jesus, no typical sacrifice thereafter could be considered acceptable in God's sight.

Thus seen, from God's standpoint, the year 32 A.D. was the last one in which the typical Passover sacrifices could be appropriately rendered. Regardless of when the typical lambs were slain and eaten in the year 33 A.D., it was of no lawful consequence if carried out after the death of the one whom they were intended to picture.

Of all events in the history of the world, none has had a greater impact than the death of the Redeemer--the anointed Son of God. More will be said of this subsequently. For now, we wish to emphasize that from the Divine standpoint, the reality of Jesus' sacrifice totally fulfilled the Passover type, leaving any subsequent offering of typical lambs legally unnecessary and without meaning.

Hence, in the year 33 A.D., there was actually no appropriate time for celebrating the Passover, since its entire basis in the Law of God was about to be done away with. If Jesus manifested a strong desire to hold such a rite and to be with his disciples once more before he suffered, it would have been a voluntary act not in opposition with the Divine will. It would have afforded the appropriate opportunity to institute the "Memorial Supper" as a commemoration of his own death, taking the place of the Passover ceremony which was about to be fulfilled.

In summary, we hope the foregoing discussions have shed some light on those chronological problems closely related to the Passover. The solutions offered were intended to be suggestive and not necessarily final. Throughout this presentation, we have sought for reasonable, satisfying answers that would stand the test of historical inquiry as well as harmonize the testimony of all the pertinent Scriptures involved. We trust that this objective has been met.

Related Chronological Problems

**Passover and Easter.** The custom of the early church in celebrating the death of Christ is significant not only in establishing the annual nature of the event, but in shedding light on its true meaning as well. We would be amiss not to point out the dramatic change in emphasis which occurred in the Christian celebration of the Passover season during the first few centuries of the church's existence. Within a relatively brief span of years, the emphasis shifted from the solemn observance of the death of Christ on its proper (Jewish) anniversary, to a light-hearted participation in the Easter festival, the date of which was specifically regulated to separate it from the Jewish Passover.

It seems clear from the historical evidence that for about the first century, the annual celebration of what was termed the PASCHA centered about the suffering, crucifixion, and death of Christ. From the writings of the early church father Tertullian, it is apparent that the whole season of the PASCHA was observed with sadness and grief, in the first (Jewish) month of each year.<sup>9</sup> It was considered the most solemn occasion of the entire year, and, in fact, the only occasion that is definitely known to have been set apart as a holy day in the early church, as verified by Tertullian.<sup>10</sup>

During this early period, Sunday, the first day of the week, was thought of as commemorating the resurrection of Christ:

"From the earliest times Christians have kept Sunday as the weekly commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. 'We keep the eighth day with joy on which also Jesus rose from the dead,' says the epistle ascribed to Barnabas (1st century), and Justin Martyr (2nd century) remarks in his first apology, 'We all gather on Sunday because on this first day ... Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead.' Sunday was a 'little Easter.'"<sup>11</sup>

Roman Catholic historians have also noted the extreme simplicity that prevailed in the early Christian worship and the absence of the complex system of holy days that was later introduced:

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<sup>9</sup>Samuel M. Jackson (ed.), "Easter," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, IV., 43.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>"Easter," *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, VII., 866.

Related Chronological Problems

"In the first three centuries PASCH referred to the annual celebration of Christ's passion and death ... The primitive liturgical year was composed simply of the regular Sunday celebrations together with the two annual feasts of the Pasch and Pentecost. This simplicity does not reveal so much a poverty of imagination as the vital characteristic of early Christian spirituality."<sup>12</sup>

After the apostolic period, however, the celebration of the PASCHA began to take on additional meaning, at least for the Western Church. Already in the second century, there is evidence that it began to include the commemoration of the resurrection as well as that of the crucifixion. Thus, the meaning of the weekly Sunday gatherings which had originated because of the reminder of the resurrection on that day was gradually altered as this aspect became incorporated into the annual celebration.

Here, then, is our first certain notice of the festival of Easter, in the Christian use of the term, dating from the middle of the second century.<sup>13</sup> From this point onward, the resurrection feature of the PASCHA was given increasing prominence until by about the fourth century it unquestionably had become the dominating part of the celebration. Some traces of the inner church struggles leading to this shift of emphasis are still to be found:

"From Tertullian it seems to be evident that there was a struggle between the Jewish and Gentile elements in the church over what was included under the feast of the PASCHA ... From these unsatisfactory notices, different views have been deduced. Neander, Hilgenfeld, and P. Schaff have held that in the second and third centuries the PASCHA included the celebrations of the resurrection and death of Christ; Steitz and Drews, only the death; while Schuerer, Karl Mueller, and others ... hold modified view[s] ... Certainly in the fourth century the term PASCHA stood for both the resurrection and the death of Christ."<sup>14</sup>

It was not only in meaning and content that the original celebration of the PASCHA was altered, but in the date that it was held as well. We have already noted the clear Scriptural grounds for observing the memorial of Jesus' death on the 14th day of Nisan. This practice emphasized the correct day of the month--numerically the 14th day--and was

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<sup>12</sup>"Easter and Its Cycle," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, V., 6.

<sup>13</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup>Jackson (ed.), "Easter," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, IV.,43-44.

Related Chronological Problems

governed by the date set by Jewish authorities for the celebration of the Passover. However, along with the shift of emphasis from the crucifixion to the resurrection, the day of the week on which Christ arose from the dead--Sunday--gained in prominence. The Roman Church took the lead in attempting to change the celebration of the PASCHA from the 14th of Nisan to the Sunday which fell on, or immediately after, that date. But the matter quickly became controversial and developed into a hot issue in all the churches of the Empire.

Church synods were called in various provinces to decide the matter. The general consensus was to follow the Roman example for Sunday, but the churches of Asia Minor refused to accept this reckoning. In the last decade of the second century (about 196 A.D.), Victor, Bishop of Rome, sought to enforce uniformity by excommunicating all dissenting churches. Although he was somewhat restrained by other leading bishops, ultimately the observance of the PASCHA on Sunday prevailed, and the Christian conception of Easter began to take shape. Historians generally consider that the prestige of Rome was enhanced thereby.

A Jewish authority shows keen insights in summarizing the early Christian controversies over the PASCHA:

“Originally 'Pascha,' or 'Passover,' was the name given by the Christians to the fourteenth day of Nisan as the day of the Crucifixion, corresponding to the eve of the Jewish Passover, the season of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb; this was followed by the memorial of the Resurrection on the succeeding Sunday; the former was regarded as a day of fasting and penitence, the latter as a festival of joy. Under the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem, who were all Jews, no difference occurred between the Jewish and the Christian dates.

“In the course of time, it appears that custom and tradition differed in the various churches of the East and the West, some laying stress upon Friday as the historical date of the Crucifixion, others again adhering more to the Jewish custom of celebrating the fourteenth day of Nisan; but as the anti-Judean element obtained ascendancy, the connection of the Jewish and the Christian Passover was severed, and adherence to the fourteenth day of Nisan by Christians (the 'Quatrodecimani') was condemned as heresy ...



*Related Chronological Problems*

“Thus the Crucifixion day ... gradually lost its ancient paschal, or Jewish character, and the day of the Resurrection assumed more and more the character of the Teutonic and the Slavonic spring festival with all its pagan rites and festive symbols.”<sup>15</sup>

Among the literature of the early church fathers bearing upon the correct date for holding the PASCHA, there are several outstanding documents. There is a letter written by Irenaeus, leader of the Christians in Gaul, to Victor, Bishop of Rome, exhorting him not to attempt excommunicating whole churches of God for holding to the observance on Nisan 14. In this letter he traces the basis for the Asian tradition of following the Jewish method of reckoning, most outstanding of which was the statement that Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and pupil of John, had so observed the occasion with Jesus' own disciples. For this reason, he states that Anicetus, Bishop of Rome from about 157-168 A.D., yielded the celebration of the Eucharist on the 14th day to Polycarp, on the occasion of his visit to Rome, and thus made peace on this matter.<sup>16</sup>

Another letter, written by Polycrates, Bishop in Asia Minor, to Victor at Rome, likewise sets out the historical basis for adhering to the 14th of Nisan date:

"Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia great luminaries sleep ... Such were Philip [the apostle of Jesus who according to tradition labored in Asia Minor] ... and two of his daughters ... There is also John, who lay on the Lord's breast ... And there is also Polycarp at Smyrna, both bishop and martyr, and Thraseas ... [Also] Sagaris ... Papius ... and Melito ... All these kept the fourteenth day of the passover according to the gospel, never swerving, but following according to the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen ... 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 ..."<sup>17</sup>

The final settlement of the Easter controversy, as far as the orthodox Western churches were concerned, came at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., presided over by Emperor Constantine himself. It becomes quite evident from a reading of Constantine's own report of the proceedings, that a strong prejudice against both the Jewish people and their customs was a prominent factor in the final decision:

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<sup>15</sup>Isidore Singer (ed.), "Easter," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, V., 29.

<sup>16</sup>Irenaeus, Letter to Victor, quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, XXIV., 16-17, translated by Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library, I., 511, 513.

<sup>17</sup>Polycrates, Letter to Victor, quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, XXIV., 2-8, translated by Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library, I., 505, 507, 509.

Related Chronological Problems

"At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day ... First of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul ... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd ... Let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness."<sup>18</sup>

There are hints in the wording of Constantine's report that the final decree of the Council was not arrived at unanimously such as he declared:

"It is, then, plainly the will of Divine Providence (as I suppose you all clearly see), that this usage should receive fitting correction, and be reduced to one uniform rule ... It was needful that this matter should be rectified, so that we might have nothing in common with that nation of parricides who slew their Lord ... In fine, ... it has been determined by the common judgment of all, that the most holy feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps to some, such modifications of the original Christian faith and practice may not appear too significant. To many discriminating students of the Bible and of history, however, these changes can only be viewed as serious corruptions of the purity and simplicity of the faith. Their eventual adoption by the majority of the church and stamping with the label of orthodoxy does not alter the fact of their spurious nature.

There is thus in the elaborate development of the Christian Easter festival one of the clearest examples of unwarranted external tampering with pristine doctrine given directly by Christ himself. We recall that when instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "***This do in remembrance of me.***" (1 Cor. 11:23-25) There is no record of his asking the disciples to commemorate any other occasion, but that of the completion of his sacrifice in death. The Apostle Paul later confirmed this when he indicated the reason for partaking of the emblems of the Lord's

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<sup>18</sup>Constantine's Letter to the Churches Respecting the Council at Nicea, quoted in Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, Book III., Chaps. 18 and 19. Translated in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, I., 524-525.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

*Related Chronological Problems*

Supper was *"to show forth the Lord's death till he come."* (1 Cor. 11:26) And, in fact, the atoning sacrifice of Christ is seen to be the central theme of the New Testament, the antitype of the vast array of animal sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation. It was to emphasize this aspect of the life of Christ--his mission to become the ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world, and the successful accomplishment of that purpose by his death on the cross--that the one holy day of the Christian calendar was enjoined upon his followers.

Easter, on the other hand, for centuries before Christ had been celebrated by the pagans of many lands to herald the coming of spring and the resurgence of the sun:

"The English word Easter and the German 'Ostern' come from a common origin (Eostur, Eastur, Ostara, Ostar), which to the Norsemen meant the season of the rising (growing) sun, the season of new birth. The word was used by our ancestors to designate the Feast of New Life in the spring. The same root is found in the name for the place where the sun rises (East, 'Ost'). The word Easter, then, originally meant the celebration of the spring sun, which had its birth in the East and brought new life upon earth. *This symbolism was transferred to the supernatural meaning of our Easter, to the new life of the Risen Christ . . .*"<sup>20</sup> [Italics added for emphasis.]

The adoption of the Easter festival into the church, accompanied by the various pagan rites and festive symbols familiar to the common people, was evidently designed as a concession to hasten the conversion of the masses. This in itself raises the question of the propriety of converting the world's masses to Christianity during the present age, or whether God's true intention might not be merely to call out a relatively small group of believers who would be willing to follow Christ in humility and suffering. But more on this later.

Here we desire to note that the borrowing and adoption of the pagan Easter rites into the Christian liturgy served merely to becloud the true significance of the Passover season. It rudely brought about a shift in emphasis from the solemn observance of the antitypical Lamb and replaced it with the gaiety and merriment of the spring festival under a new cloak of religious sanction. Those who are sincerely desirous of retaining the purity of true Christian doctrine and continuing the custom of the early church in celebrating the great

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<sup>20</sup>Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, p. 211.

Related Chronological Problems

central fact of her existence, find that they cannot accept this compromise arrangement. These are endeavoring to follow as closely as possible the pattern laid down by Jesus and the apostles, giving the true meaning to the Passover season and permitting its proper observance on the correct Jewish date.

It was the Ecumenical Council of Nicea, under the heavy hand of Emperor Constantine as we have noted, that finalized a new method for calculating the date of Easter and enforced uniformity under threat of banishment. With the declared purpose of cutting loose as far as possible from Jewish institutions, the Council decreed that the Easter season should always begin on the Friday following the first full moon after the Spring equinox, and culminate with the Sunday of the Resurrection that followed. Thus it was intended to forever be divorced from the detested Jewish calendar and to ensure that Easter would never again coincide with the date of the Passover. As a result, almost always there is a clear-cut separation in the occurrence of the holidays, and sometimes the difference amounts to almost a full month. But occasionally, contrary to the intention of the Council, because of the peculiarities and intricacies of the calculation, there is still coincidence of the days.

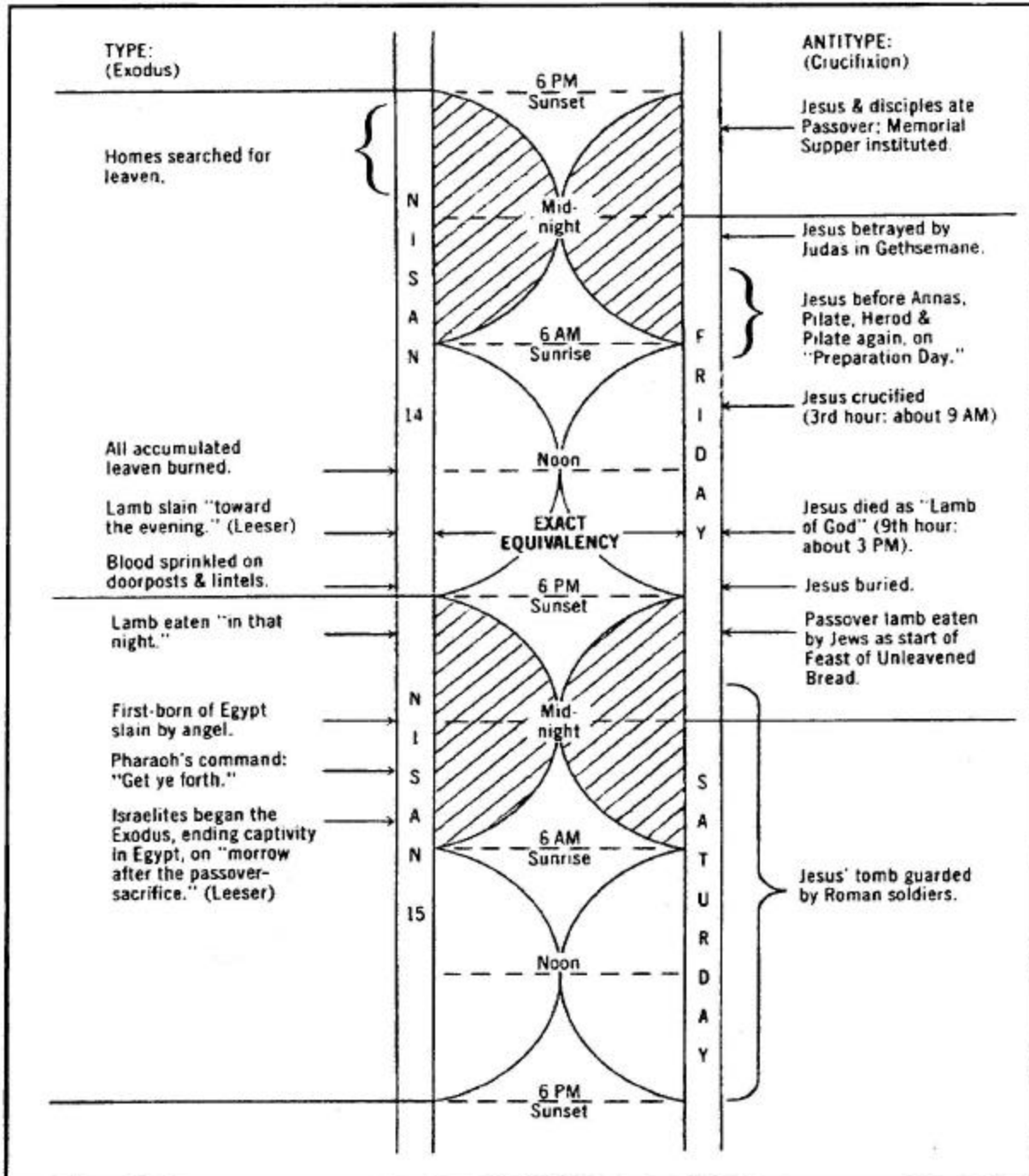
## **IX. MESSIAH'S UNFOLDING ROLE**

In the foregoing chapters, we have taken a fresh look at the Passover ceremony, screening it carefully for what might be termed "prophetic intimations of the Messiah." In Part One, the time features of the ancient rite were studied in some detail; in Part Two, these became the basis for evaluating possible fulfillments. These findings have been briefly summarized in the accompanying chart, **Exhibit J**, entitled "The Passover in Type and Antitype."

Among the impressive array of would-be messiahs appearing on the colorful scene of Jewish history, only one individual has stood out from the group: one whose standards of morality lifted him above the level of a political or military leader; one whose devout life and religious teaching marked him as a prophet of God sent on a mission of redeeming Israel and mankind; and one whose career by common admission gave the appropriate evidences of fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah, including the Passover type. Who was that one? Clearly, it was Jesus of Nazareth.

# EXHIBIT J

## THE PASSOVER IN TYPE AND ANTITYPE



*Messiah's Unfolding Role*

Understandably, however, the authorities of Jesus' day had difficulty in accepting him as the one of promise. Was not Messiah's coming to be marked with grandeur and glory? Would he not at once free the nation of Israel from bondage and elevate it to a position of prominence in the world? Jesus, as we have seen, did not live up to these common expectations. Instead, he was considered an impostor and a threat to the religious rulers and arraigned on the twin charges of blasphemy and plotting insurrection. He was then crucified on a Roman cross and made to suffer as the vilest of criminals. Few could believe that the Messiah of Israel was destined to suffer such a fate; and few could comprehend that the ignominious death of the cross was the prerequisite to entering into his glory and eventual reign.

***Hour of Destiny--To What Avail?*** Let us suppose for a moment that all would be willing to grant that the Messiah of promise has appeared on the scene. Let us also grant that the New Testament account of Jesus of Nazareth as the embodiment of the prophetic forecast is correct. The glaring and incontrovertible fact remains that he was put to death.

Thus, even though Jesus' demise be considered a sacrifice in fulfillment of prophecy, of what practical benefit has it been? If the culmination of all Jewish hopes in the expectation of a Messiah was truly seen in the life of Jesus, what tangible good has resulted? Was the promised blessing for the Jew and all humanity to be realized in a dead Messiah?

It is quite evident that unless our presentation thus far be considered merely of academic interest, in order to satisfy the inquiry of a reasoning mind, there must yet be another chapter. And indeed there is, one which is both thrilling and satisfying, for it represents but another step in the plan of God for the salvation of all mankind.

Earlier, we stated that the Passover depicted Messiah's double role: first, as the suffering servant of Jehovah who was led to the slaughter; and second, as the antitype of Moses, the deliverer of his people. We have already seen the clear fulfillment of the former role, but as yet the latter has not been touched upon. As we come to this phase of the subject, we will discover that it holds the solution to the questions now plaguing us: Why was it necessary for the Messiah to die? What possible good could have accrued from his sacrifice, regardless of how noble it might have been?

*Messiah's Unfolding Role*

To begin with, let us return to the Book of Exodus for a brief review, and then use these facts in relation to the questions at hand. For centuries, the Israelites had been in bondage to Egypt, exploited as a servile class. Hardship and toil were their lot, as they labored as farm hands and were pressed into service on the great building projects of the Nile. Being of shepherd stock, the Israelites must have found such work in mortar and brick especially difficult. ***"And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." Exodus 1:13,14***

In due time, God raised up a great leader for His people -- Moses. To him was entrusted the mighty task of delivering Israel from bondage. At the time of revealing Himself to Moses, God said:

***"I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." Exodus 2:7***

But it turned out not to be an easy matter for Moses to convince Pharaoh to let his people go. No amount of reasoning could persuade him to part with his cheap supply of foreign labor. Finally, only a series of plagues inflicted upon Egypt by the hand of the Almighty compelled Pharaoh to reconsider his stand, though as we have already seen, it necessitated the tenth and last plague of death.

The plague of death, it will be noted, came upon all the firstborn of the land who were not protected by the blood of the Passover lamb. Only the lives of the firstborn of the Israelites were spared, because only they benefited from carrying out the Lord's instructions. Eventually, this led also to the safe passage of the whole nation of Israel across the "Red Sea" (or Sea of Reeds) and out of the bondage of Egypt. At the same time, by the miraculous intervention of God, the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh and his warriors were completely annihilated. See Exodus 14.

In this stirring experience of ancient Israel, God has foreshadowed the method that He will use to bring about the salvation of all mankind. Yes, as important as these events were to the nation of Israel, we believe that God has so arranged it that they are of incalculably greater significance to us today. ***"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." 1 Corinthians 10:11***

Messiah's Unfolding Role

How was this a type or preview of grander events in the history of the world? We believe that Israel symbolized all those who will ultimately become God's people; that Egypt represented the opponents of God, led by their ruler, Pharaoh; and that Pharaoh was a type of Satan, the spiritual leader of the forces of evil, the *"god of this [evil] world."* (2 Cor. 4:4) As Israel labored under her bondage to Egypt and longed for deliverance, so too all mankind has groaned and travailed in pain under the exactions of its taskmaster, Satan, and his empire of sin, sickness and death. But there is hope, because God has raised up His deliverer--the antitypical Moses, the Messiah of prophecy--who in due time shall fulfill all that is recorded respecting his glorious future Kingdom. During his Messianic reign, Christ shall deliver all the people of God from their bondage and bring them safely across the "Red Sea," representing the Second (final) Death, wherein Satan and all his affiliates will be destroyed. See Revelation 20:10, 13-15.

This is the broad picture which spells out the final victory of the forces of God over evil, for which we are all glad. Now we need to note some of the details regarding mankind's entanglement with sin to appreciate the necessity of the death of Messiah as a means of extricating man from his plight, just as the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb served as the means which led Israel to her deliverance.

There are many plain Bible statements which depict the reality of mankind's present condition: that all are condemned to death and sooner or later share in the inevitable fate. But it was not always so! The Book of Genesis gives us the account of the fall of man and indicates that death was imposed as a penalty for disobedience to the Divine law. The New Testament confirms this account: Paul wrote that it was because of *"the offense of one [the first man Adam], [that] judgment came upon all men to condemnation."* (Romans 5:18) However, man's waywardness did not alienate him from the Creator's love; whereas Divine Justice could only condemn, Divine Love sought a solution for reconciling man, one which Divine Wisdom could fully approve and work out for man's eternal blessing.

According to the teaching of Isaiah 53, already alluded to more than once, this Divine program of redemption involved the sending of a righteous servant to the earth, who would live a blameless life and present himself as an offering for sin. In effect, he would take upon himself the iniquity of Adam (and all mankind represented in him), thereby making intercession for the transgressors.

In the words of the prophet,

*"We all like sheep went astray ... And the Lord let befall him the guilt of us all... Like the lamb which is led to the slaughter ... he opened not his mouth ... and he poured out his soul unto death ... Through his bruises, was healing granted to us." Isaiah 53*



*Messiah's Unfolding Role*

According to the logic of the Bible, an atonement of this kind could not be made without the shedding of blood. "***Apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission.***" (*Hebrews 9:22*; see also *Leviticus 17:11*.) Adam had been justly condemned for disobedience. The penalty which Divine Justice had imposed was death, the extinction of life. The exacting law of Justice could permit the restoration of life only through the substitution of another person willing to accept the penalty of death in man's place. "***An eye for an eye ... a life for a life.***" (*Deuteronomy 19:21*) The Messiah, as the pre-existent son of God, was willing to do just this. He came to the earth as a perfect human being, suffered as prophesied of him, and gave his life as a "ransom sacrifice." *Philippians 2:8*, *1 Timothy 2:5,6*

The word "ransom" in the New Testament means literally "a corresponding price." For the Messiah to be qualified to offer such a sacrifice, two things would be required: First, he would have to be a perfect and unblemished human being, the exact counterpart of the first man Adam prior to his fall. Second, he voluntarily would have to give up his human life, sacrificing it wholly and forever to Divine Justice in the place of Adam and the human race condemned in him.

The record of the New Testament is that Jesus of Nazareth carried out both of these requirements of sacrifice. We have already noted how his perfect and unblemished humanity resulted from his miraculous birth. We know also that his blood was shed upon the cross of Calvary as he willingly poured out his soul unto death. Then followed the mighty display of Divine power as God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day. But many have failed to note that in his resurrected state, Jesus became a glorious spirit being with powers reserved only for such, and that he was entirely divested of his humanity which of necessity was forever sacrificed. See *John 6:51*.

With this background, we begin to see that the death of Jesus as the Messiah was not a drawback at all. He had come to the hour of destiny, to the focal point of so many prophecies, to the hour of expectation, not in vain. He had come as the heavenly messenger sent from God, the fullest expression of the Father's love for man, for this one great purpose--to give his life. Thus was carried out in reality the most fundamental part of God's plan of salvation, entailing the providing of the ransom price for man's redemption. And Jesus himself, as the willing and obedient servant of God, suffered no permanent harm, being raised a glorious spirit being and now exalted at the right hand of God. See *Philippians 2:6-11*.

*Messiah's Unfolding Role*

But, someone will insist, Jesus' death has produced no tangible benefit for either the Jew in the fulfillment of his messianic hopes nor for the Gentile as partaker of the blessings of Messiah's earthly kingdom. All mankind are still dying from "natural" causes, disease and poverty continue to ravage the earth, and goodwill towards fellow man remains but an elusive hope. When, if ever, will Messiah's sacrifice affect life on earth in the realistic way the prophecies portray?

The Bible furnishes the answer to our enigma. There is a very valid reason for the delay in the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. All of the prophecies pertaining to its operation in bringing fullness of life, happiness, economic security, and peace to the nations will yet be fulfilled!<sup>1</sup> There is but one essential intervening step in the plan of God which must first be carried out, one to which we would now like to call attention.

***Sharing with Messiah.*** To discover what requisite remains to be completed before Messiah's Kingdom can be established, we turn for the last time to the broad Passover picture and the escape from Egypt. We note that it was the firstborn of only the Israelites who were spared in the final plague; and it was the blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled in the prescribed manner, which saved them from the fate that befell the unprotected firstborn of Egypt. The New Testament calls our attention to this picture by adopting the term "firstborn" [of Israel] and shows who is represented thereby: It is "***the church of the firstborn,***" made up of believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. See Hebrews 12:23.

The term "church" as used here and elsewhere in the Bible does not refer to a building or edifice; neither does it describe a particular sect or denomination. The word is a translation from the Greek EKKLESIA, which means "that which is called out." Hence it refers to the actual people whom God is calling out of this world to become followers of His dear Son. These constitute the true Church, and together with its head Jesus, make up the Messiah class.

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion of the blessings to be brought to humanity through the Messianic Kingdom and a consideration of evidences that it is close at hand, we recommend the booklet, "*The Kingdom of God.*" It is available from Dawn Publications, East Rutherford, New Jersey 07073.

Messiah's Unfolding Role

This company of believers, upon the basis of their faith in Jesus and the efficacy of his sacrifice, have their sins forgiven and are no longer reckoned as being under the Adamic condemnation. By accepting the finished work of Jesus on their behalf, they reckonedly pass from death unto life, gaining a standing of righteousness before God. ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."*** (Romans 8:1) This group thus becomes the first class of fallen humanity to be released from the bondage of sin and death, and is appropriately called ***"the church of the firstborn."***

It is to this group of individuals that God has granted the almost incredible legacy of becoming ***"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."*** (Romans 8:17) ("Christ" is simply the Greek equivalent for Messiah, and signifies "the anointed one.") Out of every nation, every kindred, and every tongue, they have been called. Not many of them are wise by earthly standards; not many are mighty or in positions of power; not many are of noble birth or from the socially elite. Nonetheless, while unrecognized by the world, they have been responding to God's call, they have been believing in the Messiah and his work, they have been witnessing to others, and they have been preparing themselves as God's elect, in harmony with God's purposes for them.

Here, then, is the reason for the seeming delay in obtaining tangible benefits from Messiah's sacrifice. God has been selecting and preparing a spiritual family which is destined to share in administering the blessings of Messiah's Kingdom. The subjects of that kingdom will be the remainder (and vast majority) of mankind. Not until the full number of the antitypical firstborn class is complete can the blessing phase of God's plan for earth's teeming masses begin to operate.

The fleshly house of Israel was the first to be honored with the privilege of becoming sons of God; indeed, the Messiah himself was sent to them. Through all of Jesus' ministry and for three and one half years thereafter, until the full close of the ***"Seventy weeks of favor"*** marked out in Daniel's prophecy,<sup>2</sup> the invitation to ***the "high calling of God"*** was reserved exclusively for the Jew. Afterwards, beginning with Cornelius, God sought from amongst all the nations those individuals with a responsive heart and a desire to serve Him. ***"Simon (Peter) has described the***

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<sup>2</sup>See Section VII., under heading "A Comprehensive Old Testament Prophecy."

Messiah's Unfolding Role

***manner in which God first visited the Gentiles, in order to take from among them a people to bear his name."*** (Acts 15:14, Twentieth Century N.T.) And since that time, the call has gone out to both Jew and Gentile alike, on an individual basis, to find the one here or the one there who would respond.

In a sense, the concept of Messiah as being represented by the whole nation of Israel, which is gaining in popular thought and commonly held by Jewish political leaders today, does carry a measure of truth. There is to be a Messiah class, a corporate body of believers in Christ, and it is to consist of Israelites. In reality, however, those who compose this group are spiritual Israelites; that is, they demonstrate the faith of Abraham but are not necessarily Jewish by natural birth. Shortly we will examine some of the Scriptures which enumerate the concept of the Messiah class and identify its members as the spiritual "seed of Abraham."

It should not be deemed necessary to think of the concepts of a collective Messiah and of a personal Messiah as being mutually exclusive. Jesus himself clearly fulfills the latter role, to which none can add nor subtract. The fact that by design there are many members in the body of Christ does not detract from the singleness of the head and the clear-cut position which it holds. Conversely, the existence of a head does not dispense with the desirability of body members. By God's arrangement, there is an appropriate function for both head and body.

It is interesting to note that in a work edited by David Ben-Gurion, the dynamic Jewish statesman and first prime minister of Israel, one of the contributors sets forth very convincing Scriptural arguments for a personal Messiah. This despite that editor's well known belief that Messiah was represented by the whole nation of Israel in the practical achievements of building up the new state. It is Eliahu Auerbach who points out in this volume that it would hardly do for the Messiah to be merely a symbol of the people of Israel, for in several chapters in the Book of Isaiah he is clearly portrayed as a great personality:

"Here is a new ideal of man ... who suffers in silence, who walks humbly, but fearlessly holds his ground until righteousness conquers. (42:2-4) The power that fills him gives him a feeling of divine vocation and confidence in his final success (49:1-6) despite all obstacles, and even in moments of weakness. His suffering is great, he is almost overwhelmed by persecution, but he trusts in God (50:5-9).

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“In ... 52:13 to 53:12, the speaker is no longer the Servant of the Lord himself, but the poet to whom the Servant is a religious manifestation. Here it becomes abundantly clear that the reference is not to the people of Israel symbolized in the person of the Servant of God, but to a specific living personality; for the God-fearing servant *dies* in his sufferings: ‘And he made his grave with the wicked.’ (53:9)”<sup>3</sup>

Yes, as Mr. Auerbach correctly points out, the Scripture indicates that the Messiah, in his role as the Suffering Servant, must die. As has already been shown, this was the prime requisite for his becoming the Redeemer of both Israel and the world. Surely no loyal Jew could bear the thought of the whole nation of Israel passing out of existence again! And thank God, the Bible gives assurance that such will never be the case, for the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth was fully efficacious.

In summarizing Messiah's unfolding role in Jehovah's majestic plans and purposes, we should not lose sight of the overall time features. As the great scheme of salvation has been moving forward through ages and dispensations, mankind for the most part has been oblivious to it all. To those few who were enlightened by God's Spirit and made aware of the program, its progress must have seemed unbearably slow. But God's ways are not man's ways, nor is He limited to our life's measure of threescore and ten. God took time (billions of years, apparently) in the creation and preparation of the world for human habitation; He took time (6,000 years) to give the world its necessary experience with evil; He took time (4,000 years) to prepare for the advent of Messiah as the world's Redeemer; and He is taking time (2,000 years) for the preparation of those who are to share in Messiah's glorious reign.

Almost two thousand years have now accrued since Messiah faced the hour of destiny. During this period, the selection of members of the "Royal Priesthood" (or Divine family) has been continuing. The end of this period of special favor in earth's history, the age set apart for the calling out of God's elect, now appears to be in sight. The "end of the age," according to Bible prophecy, is upon us. Only a short time remains, therefore, for the full number to be completed.

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<sup>3</sup> David Ben-Gurion, editor, *The Jews in Their Land*, p. 101.

*Messiah's Unfolding Role*

After this "*present evil age*" is brought to an end by the prophetic "*great time of trouble*" upon the earth, God will establish Messiah's Kingdom and "*the desire of all nations will come.*" Messiah will reveal himself to his people Israel, and to all the Gentiles as well, as he asserts his rulership in glory and power. His true Church, completed prior to this event, will be with him and share the honor of administering the Divine government, the influence of which will extend to all corners of the earth. It will be a time of great joy and gladness for Israel and all people as God uses this means to pour out His long-promised blessings and usher in the Golden Age:

*"And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written: After this I will return and will build again the House of David which hath fallen down, even from its ruins will I rebuild it and I will set it up; so that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, even all the nations among whom my name is called, saith the Lord." Acts 15:15-17 (N.T. from 26 Translations)*

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

Truth, it is said, is stranger than fiction, and we might add, far more wonderful and satisfying. Israel rightly expected her Messiah of promise but utterly failed to recognize him when he did appear. Instead, many pseudo-messiahs were gladly received, because each from the human standpoint offered some hope of deliverance. But none of these figures carried the Divine approval and each left but a fleeting imprint and a shattered dream upon the sands of time. Yet it is not so with the true Messiah!

The concept of Messiah is generally thought of as being Jewish, since it is primarily a product of the holy prophets of old who lived and spoke in Israel. Yet, it is quite evident that Israel is not alone in needing deliverance. In an even greater sense, all mankind have been shackled by sin, sickness, and death, as the Scripture states: *"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ... For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."* (Romans 8:22, 19) Inherent in the human spirit has been a longing for release from the bondage of corruption and evil, even if expressed more out of desperation than conscious knowledge of God's plan for the human race.

How appropriate, then, to find that Israel's Messiah is also the world's Saviour! God's program for human redemption has been centered in this grand personage, who was to become first, the sacrificial Lamb, and later, the mighty Deliverer. Though largely unrecognized by men, this program of redemption has been moving grandly onward! It was hinted at in the shadows and types and dark sayings of Old Testament times; it was portrayed in the myriad of animal sacrifices carried out for centuries; and particularly did it find expression in the exacting rites of the Tabernacle and Passover ceremonies.

In due time, the Logos -- Jesus in his prehuman existence as the spokesman of God -- was selected to become the antitypical Lamb which would take away the sin of the world. Voluntarily consenting to the Father's plan, he underwent a change of nature from the spirit to the human

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plane, and was born into the world a perfect human being. As such, he could provide the corresponding price needed to release Adam and his posterity from the sentence of death. The details of Jesus' earthly career and his faithfulness even unto the cross are matters of historical record and have already been touched upon. The Scriptures declare that he ***"was made in the likeness of men ... [that he] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8,9***

With the offering for sin completed and Jesus highly exalted for his faithfulness in carrying out the Father's will, the blessings of Messiah's reign might have begun at once. But it pleased the Father to introduce a further step in the Divine plan, providing for the calling out of an elect class of individuals to become associated with Jesus as his underpriests, and share in all his work. Herein lies one of the great mysteries of God which the New Testament indicates was ***"hid from ages and from generations but [which] now is made manifest ... Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:26,27)*** And this is the present aspect of God's program of redemption which must be completed before Messiah's glorious reign can commence.

Sharing with Messiah! Can it be that such is indeed the Father's purpose? Can we conceive of such a high calling being extended to the human creation, which seems so insignificant in the vast complex of the universe about us? (Psalm 8:3, 4) From our own limited viewpoint, such a hope appears too sublime and too lofty, far beyond the reach of mortal man. Who would dare aspire to such a height or even frame the thought?

And yet, the Holy Scriptures plainly and unmistakably set forth this concept:

***"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure ... Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (2 Pet. 1:10, Phil. 3:14)***

***"No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron [the high priest of ancient Israel]." (Hebrews 5:4)***

***"The Spirit itself beareth witness ... that we are ... heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:16, 17)***

***"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ [the Messiah] have put on Christ; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise ... And in [Abraham's] seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gal. 3:27, 29; Gen. 22:18)***



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***"To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne ... He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." (Rev. 3:21, 2:26)***

***"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6)***

***"Thus saith the Lord ... in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth [the righteous social order under Messiah's Kingdom], to cause to inherit the desolate heritages [the lost endowments of mental, moral, and physical perfection]; that thou mayest say to the prisoners [mankind locked in the prison-house of sin, sickness, and death], go forth; to them that are in darkness [spiritual blindness and ignorance of God's ways], show yourselves." (Isaiah 49:8, 9)***

From these and related passages of Scripture, we are informed that it is indeed the Father's purpose to invite a few of His human family to become associated with His dear Son and to share with him the honors and privileges of the Messiah. Those who compose this group will be a relatively small number compared to the world's total population, for they are to be used as instruments in God's hand to convey the promised blessings to mankind.

To depict the intimate relationship of this called-out class to its head Jesus, the Bible uses the analogy of a bride and bridegroom. (See Rev. 19:7 and 21:2, 9.) When the full number have been selected and have made their calling and election sure by faithfulness unto death, the ***"marriage of the Lamb"*** will take place. Christ (the Messiah) and his bride (the Church) will be united as one body and begin the work of restoring, uplifting, and regenerating the human race. ***"And the Spirit [Jesus] and the Bride [the Church] say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17***

These are but a few of the Scriptures that reveal God's purpose to choose a bride class for the Messiah. How, then, will we respond to this knowledge? Are we desirous of becoming associated with the Messiah of prophecy and share in the work of his glorious reign? The way remains open. The invitation has been extended. But only those desirous of developing the proper heart condition and character may share in this honor. Such a character is an

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outgrowth of a willingness to follow Jesus in the present life, when the true Christian pathway is a lowly one. It is brought to maturity in the trials and buffetings of the way, in a world which is clearly out of harmony with the principles of truth and righteousness.

The voice of the Messiah continues to speak clearly today: ***"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."*** (Mat. 16:24) This is not a promise of earthly riches nor of honor in the present life; no, merely the implication of sacrifice. Messiah's footstep followers can hardly expect to fare differently than he himself did, and it is evident that he was misunderstood, despised, and rejected of men. Nevertheless, theirs is a calling which knows none greater and transcends all that man can think or hope. And to those who are faithful in laying down their lives in this holy service, the end thereof is glorious!

Yes, God has promised an exceedingly high reward for those who are willing to cultivate faith in the Messiah's redeeming work; for those who patiently proclaim the ***"gospel of the [coming] Kingdom"*** and the world-wide reign of Messiah; and for those who are steadfast in their determination to serve God and to grow in the character likeness of His dear Son. What is that reward? It will be ***"glory, honor, and immortality,"*** the highest plane of life. (Romans 2:7) It is reserved only for the elect family of God who become Messiah's joint-heirs. It is all part of God's wondrous plan to elevate a chosen few to become administrative members of the Divine government, for the purpose of dispensing blessings to all the families of the earth.

Let us not neglect so great a salvation and so high a privilege! Forces are already at work in the world which are setting the stage for the final drama of this present age, at the close of which the opportunity for entrance into the high calling must cease. The social unrest of the nations is gathering momentum, like the angry waves of the sea. Nominal churchianity is losing its hold upon the people, with ecumenism now being advanced in a final bid for survival. But the flames of anarchy are already leaping across the earth. The increase of knowledge of the past century is leading to a ***"time of trouble such as never was,"*** (Dan. 12:1) and men's hearts are failing them for fear as they survey the impending events.

Only in Israel has a star of hope appeared: in a miracle of rebirth, she has been reestablished as a nation and her scattered people returned from all corners of the earth. But even Israel, according to the prophecies which detail events at the closing hours of this age (Ezekiel 38, 39; Zechariah 14, etc.), must yet undergo her own special time of testing and purging. Not until her eyes have been opened respecting the true identity of Messiah can she receive the fullness of God's blessing and assume her destined role in Messiah's Kingdom. And in this connection we read:

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***"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." Zech. 12:9-11 (K.J. with Rotherham footnote)***

Yes, throughout all the land of Israel, there shall be a great mourning in the realization of the tragic failure of the Jews to have recognized their Messiah and appreciated the sacrificial work of the one who was sent to them. But, thank God, their mourning will turn to joy as they further realize that ***"God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew ... And so all Israel shall be saved ... As touching the election [to a leadership role in the Kingdom], they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable." Romans 11:2, 26, 28, 29***

But before this stirring moment in the history of Israel takes place, the special invitation to the high calling of God and to joint-heirship with the Messiah will have ceased. Of necessity, before the earthly phase of the Kingdom can begin, the heavenly phase under the administration of the Messiah class must already have been set in motion. Thus, the privilege of membership in this elect body can continue but a brief span and will have been brought to a close shortly before Israel's final deliverance and exaltation.

The present challenge before us, then, is one of faith. In the future when God openly intervenes on behalf of His people of old, all the world will be apprised of this startling event, and it will become a self-evident reality to everyone, whether righteous or not. God will reveal Himself before all the nations, and in particular ***"the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward."*** (Ezek.39:21,22) But the door to the "high calling" will then have closed, and the special rewards of faith which are held out to the believer at this present time will have been allotted.

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Again, how will we respond to the challenge before us? The united testimony of history has borne out the prophetic forecast of Scripture pertaining to the identity of the Messiah. To the reasoning mind, the evidence pointing to Jesus of Nazareth is overwhelming. In full heart appreciation of his sacrifice on our behalf, will we now reach out in faith to accept him as Lord and Master of our lives? And are we prepared to become identified with him as we daily take up our cross in walking the true Christian pathway and laying down our lives in his service?

If we do these things, we may also treasure as our own each precious promise to share in the glories of Messiah which shall surely follow.

Poem

## **DELIVERANCE THROUGH THE LAMB**

Many years ago  
In the Valley of the Nile  
Dwelt a people sore oppressed.  
They had waited long  
For deliv'rance and relief;  
They were weary and distressed.

To effect release,  
Every household slew a lamb  
At the time that God had said.  
When the tenth plague struck,  
Moses led his people forth;  
Egypt mourned its firstborn dead.

Thus by God's own means,  
In a great display of pow'r  
All the Israelites went free.  
In pursuing them,  
Pharaoh and his hosts were slain  
In the waters of the sea.

Oh, but one may ask,  
Why the slaying of a lamb?  
It was done for you and me:  
To show forth in type  
How the Son of God would die,  
The condemned race to set free.

For, since Adam sinned,  
The entire human race  
Have in sorrow, toil, and pain  
Ever struggled on,  
Seeking for a better day,  
But in bondage yet remain.

Poem

Helpless in their plight--  
Through the "Lamb of Calvary"  
God did full provision make  
To atone for sin  
And bring blessings to mankind,  
Of which all may soon partake.

For the "Lamb of God"  
Is "Messiah," promised long--  
The Deliver'r, Judge, and King!  
He'll bring life and health  
To the dead and dying race;  
And with grateful hearts they'll sing.

In His glor'ous reign  
Man will walk in righteous ways;  
Peace and justice will prevail.  
Still repenting not,  
Satan shall be slain at last.  
All his evil schemes will fail.

But the question comes,  
As the years of time roll on:  
Why do death and sin not cease?  
It's been cent'ries now  
Since the Lamb of God appeared.  
When, Oh, when will He bring peace?

First, a special group--  
Those who heed the Gospel Call  
And who walk the "narrow way"--  
Must be tried and proved  
And found worthy by His grace  
To assist in that Grand Day.

As joint-heirs with Christ,  
They will share Messiah's throne:  
To deliver and restore;  
And the ransomed race  
Plus the countless hosts of Heav'n  
Will praise God forevermore.

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