

## **FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

Since today is Easter, I thought I would look at a few things regarding this time of year, as it relates to our life in Christ. I'd like to start off by sharing something that's not really "present" truth, but I still think it's interesting. I was doing some research this week regarding the term "Easter" in Acts 12:4. I'm sure most of you have heard people say term "Easter" in that passage is wrong, and that it should have been translated "Passover". Well, I never bought that argument because the passage itself says that Peter was arrested by King Herod during the "days of unleavened bread".

*Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (**Then were the days of unleavened bread.**) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; **intending after Easter** to bring him forth to the people.*

*Acts 12:1-4*

In order to understand this, you have to know a little bit about the feasts of Israel. So let me give you a quick overview. Under the first covenant, the children of Israel were required to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. Each of those three times, a religious festival was held. We commonly refer to these three festivals as "feasts": The Feast of Passover, The Feast of Pentecost, and The Feast of Tabernacles.

Two of these feasts are broken up into sub-feasts. *Passover* is a combination of the Day of Passover (with the Passover meal); the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which lasts for seven days); and the Day (or Feast) of First fruits. *Tabernacles* is a combination of the Day (or Feast) of Trumpets; the Day of Atonement; and a seven-day celebration called the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles). The second festival of the year—*the Feast of Weeks*—has no sub-feasts. Below is what these feasts look like in a list:

### **The Feast of Passover**

- ~ Passover
- ~ Unleavened Bread
- ~ First fruits

### **The Feast of Weeks (or First Fruits)**

### **The Feast Of Tabernacles**

- ~ Trumpets
- ~ Atonement
- ~ Booths (or Tabernacles proper)

There has been some confusion over a few of these terms. For instance, when you talk about "*first fruits*", this could be a reference to the day which comes at the end of the Passover festival, or it could be a reference to the day which makes up the *second* feast—The Feast of Weeks—which comes 50 days after

Passover. Another bit of confusion comes from the names which apply to the Feast of Passover. Although the term “Passover” is regarded as a “feast” (in the sense of a religious festival), there is only one place in the Old Testament where the whole festival is actually referred to as a feast: “*In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have **the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten***” (Ezek. 45:21).

Everywhere else in the Old Testament, the term Passover is talking about either *the day* the Passover meal is eaten, or the *meal* itself. It’s a reference to a single day—the Day of Passover. The actual name of Israel’s first religious festival of the year was “*The Feast of Unleavened Bread*”. For instance, in the two main passages where God gives the people of Israel instructions on when and how to observe these feasts, “Unleavened Bread” is the name of the first one:

***Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. 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: and none shall appear before me empty:) And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.***

*Exodus 23:14-17*

***Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.***

*Deuteronomy 16:16-17*

Except for that one passage in Ezekiel, the term *Passover* in the Old Testament is *always* a reference to the actual meal and/or the day the meal is eaten. If you doubt this, just get your concordance out and look up the word “feast”. You will see multiple references to the feast of *unleavened bread*, the feast of *weeks*, and the feast of *tabernacles*; but only *one* reference to the feast of Passover”—and that reference is talking about the meal, not to the whole festival. Next, look up the word “passover” and you will find that in every instance, it’s a reference to either the day the meal is eaten, or the meal itself.. Passover is simply the *first part* (or the first day) of Unleavened Bread. I believe there is a reason for this, but I’ll get to that a little later. The order of Israel’s first feast is given in Leviticus chapter 23:

***These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. 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. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.*

Leviticus 23:4-8

The Passover is clearly said to be on the *fourteenth* day of the first month; while the days of Unleavened Bread start on the *fifteenth* day of that month and lasts for seven days. For seven days after Passover, the children of Israel were to eat *unleavened* bread. The first and seventh day were Sabbaths. So when the writer of Acts said Peter was arrested during the “*days of unleavened bread*”, this is a specific reference to the seven days *after* the Day of Passover.

The word that was translated “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is: “pascha” (*pas'-khah*)—Strong's #3957. It's an Aramaic word, not a Greek word; and it's consistently translated as “Passover” throughout the New Testament, except here. Since Passover is always a reference to the *first day* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament, it's quite logical to view “Easter” as the correct translation in Acts 12:4 because there is no way King Herod would be waiting for *pascha* (ie: the Day of Passover) to kill Peter when the Day of Passover had already come and gone. Peter was arrested after *pascha*. So unless Herod was planning to keep him until the next *pascha* (Passover)—which was a year away—it's absurd to say that he was waiting till *after* Passover to kill him.

Also, there were other factors involved which made me think Easter was the correct translation. One is that there is no Greek equivalent for the term Easter—so this could be one reason they used *pascha* to refer to this pagan festival. Secondly, Easter was a pagan festival that was celebrated by the Romans around the same time as Passover. However, as I was reading an article about Easter recently, something the writer said jumped out at me when I read it. He was actually defending the translation of Easter:

“It must also be noted that whenever the passover is mentioned in the New Testament, **the reference is always to the meal**, to be eaten on the night of April 14th **not** the entire week. The days of unleavened bread are NEVER referred to as the Passover. (It must be remembered that the angel of the Lord passed over Egypt on **one** night, **not** seven nights in a row.”

Suddenly, for the first time, the thought occurred to me to check and see if this claim was true. I already knew that Passover was always a reference to *the day* in the Old Testament, and not the whole festival; but I had never checked to see if this was the case in the New Testament. When I did, I was surprised to find that on at least *one* occasion, *pascha* is a reference to the whole festival of Unleavened Bread, not just the first day of that festival: “*Now **the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover***” (Lk. 22:1).

Actually, when you examine all the passages in the New Testament, there are several which use *pascha* to refer to entire Feast of Unleavened Bread. Pascha is used to refer to the actual Passover *meal* itself, the *day* of the meal, the *entire* festival, or any combination of the three. So when it says Herod was “intending after *pascha*” to kill Peter, *pascha* could be a reference to the whole feast. He could have been waiting till after *pascha* (the festival), not *pascha* (the day) to bring Peter out and kill him.

At this point I was no longer convinced Easter was the correct translation. However, I wasn't convinced Passover was right, either. When I dug a little deeper, I found out that *pascha* had been translated as Easter *throughout* the New Testament in earlier translations of the Bible—particularly by William Tyndale in his New Testament. The King James translators actually went through the New Testament and *corrected* all the references to Easter, except for the one in Acts. Why they choose to keep *that* one, I don't know. Maybe they felt Passover was wrong for the same reason I did. But one thing is certain: they didn't just stick that word in there because they had some kind of hidden agenda—Catholic or otherwise. The people who go around saying the translators put Easter in their for some nefarious reason are wrong.

**NOTE:** At the end of this article are **two** lists of Scriptures. The first list is of **all** the passages in the New Testament (KJV) where *pascha* is used. The second list is a sampling of passages where translators **before** the King James Bible had translated *pascha* as Easter, but the King James translators corrected them.

So right now, it looks to me as if the term *pascha* probably should have been translated Passover. I wanted to share this with you so you can consider the facts yourselves and make your own decision. I have no hidden agenda to push in this regard. I'm not a King James only person. I don't think the King James Version is perfect and without error. So I don't waste my time trying to prove that it is. But at the same time, neither do I agree with those who claim the King James is *inferior* to the later versions, and because it's inferior, we should basically stop using it. Overall, I believe the King James is *far superior* to all the other versions out there. It's certainly the *safest* Bible to read.

Now, getting back to why Israel's first feast is called Unleavened Bread (instead of Passover). I think the reason this is the case is because the *majority* of that feast had to do staying away from leaven. You had the first day of the feast—the Day of Passover. Then you had seven days of eating unleavened bread. Then, there was a day at the end, called the Day (or Feast) of First Fruits. So, not partaking of anything leavened consumed the biggest part of this festival. I think God wanted to emphasize the fact that the people carried a great deal of responsibility when they participated in this feast.

*God* is the one who provided the forgiveness and justification, represented by the blood of the Passover lamb. Partaking of that lamb represented Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which represents deliverance from *the world*. So, eating the Passover represented the fact that God did something for the people of Israel that they could *never* do for themselves. However, *immediately* after celebrating the reality that God did something for them which they could never do for themselves, the Lord commanded them to do something they *could* do themselves. He commanded them to abstain from leaven for seven days.

What does avoiding leaven represent to us? I believe it represents not partaking of things that are sinful. There are *two kinds* of leaven spoken of in the New Testament. One is good because it represents good things; the other is evil because it represents evil things. Thus, the leaven that is referred to in the Old Testament feast, represents the bad kind of spiritual leaven you see referred to in the New Testament. Having natural Israel eat unleavened bread for seven days is a type and shadow of us not partaking of *spiritual* leaven after we are born again—after we have partaken of the true Passover Lamb.

That literal feast was a picture of a *spiritual reality* that would be revealed and available under the New Testament. When we are born again, we partake spiritually of the true Passover Lamb. Of course, we have to freely choose to accept that Lamb as an atonement for our sin. But once we choose to accept that sacrifice, the rest has to be done by God. God does for us what we could never do ourselves by being good or by obeying any kinds of laws or commandments. He forgives us, cleanses us, and justifies us by the blood of that Lamb. But immediately after we are born again, the responsibility is placed *on us* to no longer partake of *spiritual* leaven for seven *spiritual* days. Seven is the number of completion or perfection. So under the New Testament, seven days symbolizes our *whole* spiritual journey.

Leaven—when it's being referred to in a bad sense—is sin. There are several types of leaven clearly defined in the New Testament. So let's take a few minutes and look at them.

*Then Jesus said unto them, **Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.** And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?...How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of **the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.***

*Matthew 16:6-8 & 11-12*

Here, Jesus refers to *bad doctrine* as leaven. He told His disciples to beware of doctrinal leaven. When Jesus tells us to beware of something, He means precisely that. The influence of *bad doctrine* in our lives is no joke. False doctrines are *not* harmless. Not only do they blind people to the truth of what God is doing right now; not only do they cause them to miss God's perfect will for their lives in many different areas; many times bad doctrine actually contains *supernatural power* because it has been formulated and conceived by a demon spirits.

*This* type of doctrine will be the leaven that's prominent in the last days. It will have the power to destroy God's people. It will be an integral part of the end-time apostasy. That's why Paul said: "...*in the **latter times** some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and **doctrines of devils***" (1. Tim. 4:1). So when anyone tells you doctrine *isn't* important—it's all about love and relationships and experience—a red flag should go up in your spirit because only Satan would tell you not to worry about doctrine, when there is such an emphasis in the New Testament on learning, teaching, maintaining, defending, and if need be, *dividing* over sound doctrine.

*In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of **the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.***

*Luke 12:1*

Here, Jesus refers to hypocrisy as leaven. Hypocrisy is basically pretending to be something you are not; like an actor cast in a play. However, it can go much deeper than a conscience pretending to be something we aren't. Many times hypocrisy is really a self deception people are caught in because they actually believe they are something they aren't. They aren't "pretending" as far as they are concerned—they really believe the lie they are living.

When a person realizes they are pretending to be something or somebody they really aren't, there is hope for them to be convicted of that lie—until their conscience becomes seared. Once this happens, there is very little hope for them because they *no longer realize* they are pretending. They no longer have the capacity to understand that they are pretending. The ability to see the truth is lost to them forever—unless God performs a mighty miracle in their lives.

When natural leaven is put into a ball of dough, it affects the *whole* thing. It permeates that whole lump of dough. Hypocrisy does the same thing in our life, if not checked. When *religious* people are hypocrites; when they are living a lie (whether knowingly or unknowingly), they never view themselves as jerks, or a hypocrites, or scoundrels, or law-breakers. They always see themselves as heroes, as honest people, as good people, as righteous people, full of noble motives and intentions. And just like natural leaven puffs up the dough, so the leaven of hypocrisy *puffs up* the hypocrite.

Most Christians have some type of hypocrisy in their lives. We pretend to have virtues that we really don't possess. And just like the person who has to punch down the dough when it rises, so God has to *punch us down* when the hypocrisy that's in us starts puffing us up. Nobody likes to get punched down by God, but unless you are completely free from hypocrisy, it has to come. It's best to *voluntarily* ask God to show us any leaven of hypocrisy that's in us today, so we can deal with it and get free from it, lest we have to face it at the Judgement. That's why the very next thing Jesus said was:

*For there is nothing covered, that **shall not be revealed**; neither hid, **that shall not be known**. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be **proclaimed upon the housetops**.*

*Luke 12:2-3*

If we don't voluntarily seek the Lord today for wisdom and light in this whole area, tomorrow we may find that God has no choice but to expose the hidden and secret things that have chosen to hide and cover. It's much *better* to co-operate with God and be *punched down* now—privately—just between you and Him, than to have Him punch us down *openly* before the entire creation when He returns. Right? So on the count of three, I want everyone to say: "*Please punch me down, Lord!*" Amen.

*Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of **the leaven of Herod**.*

*Mark 8:14-15*

Here, Jesus refers to a certain kind of leaven, called the “leaven of Herod”, but He never really explains what that leaven is. Different people have different views on what this leaven is. My view is that since Herod was the *political* leader at that time, it must have something to do with the realm of politics. My guess is, the leaven of Herod is the converging of religion and politics—that is, using religion for *wicked* political purposes.

The Pharisees were the Fundamentalist wing of Judaism in that day; while the Sadducees were the Liberal wing. The Sadducees had chosen to make some political compromises with the ruling country of Rome. As a result, Rome decreed that the chief priest would be a Sadducee. So the Sadducees were what you might call “political bedfellows” with King Herod.

King Herod wasn’t Jewish. So he didn’t observe the Jewish Feasts or obey the Jewish Law. Herod was a sinner, a murderer, an adulterer, a liar, and every other thing you would expect from political rulers who are desperate to get power and keep power. But he was also *religious*; and he knew how to use religion—including the Judaism of that day—to further his political goals. So my view of “the leaven of Herod” is when we mix the wickedness of *the world*, and especially the *political* world, with true religion in order to get what *we* want in this life.

***It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.***

*I. Corinthians 5:1-7*

Here, leaven represents not only the sin of fornication a member of the congregation was involved in; it also represents the *ungodly tolerance* of that sin by the other members of that church. This is precisely where today’s *demonic* doctrine of love will eventually lead every congregation. The Corinthians had accepted Satan’s counterfeit love as God’s love. This *doctrinal* leaven was causing them to tolerate *moral* leaven because a fellow believer was *openly* engaging in sin—it was “commonly reported”. Everyone knew what was going on. Yet instead of confronting him, rebuking him, calling him to repentance, and then separating from him if he refused to repent; they were all accepting his sin. No doubt they thought they were showing him “unconditional love” and were *proud* of their ability to tolerate his wickedness.

So brother Paul had to come along and “*punch them down*” a bit. He told them they were walking in deception and said that far from accepting this man’s behavior and showing him love, they should have

mourned so that he might be “taken away” from them. Instead of accepting his *moral* leaven of fornication in the hopes that love and tolerance would eventually bring him around, they needed to deliver him to Satan for “the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”.

Do you think it was a callous heart that made Paul instruct them to turn that guy over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh? I don't. I think Paul was displaying the love of God towards that guy. The brethren in that congregation were deceived by Satan's false love. They were trying to love the guy in his sin so he wouldn't be driven away. But they were blind to the reality that this guy was *already* gone, spiritually. He just didn't have the courage to leave the fellowship *physically* because remaining in the fellowship provided him with (a false sense of) security. He got religious security from the assembly; but the only thing he was capable of giving back to the assembly was spiritual death. His *only hope* was to be cut off. Only this type of action could possibly destroy his false security and make him realize that he cannot have fellowship with God's people as long as he continues to live in blatant sin.

So, while the people in that congregation were offering this guy a Satanic counterfeit of God's love in the hopes of not offending him—which would have only insured that he *never* repented—Paul was demonstrating God's true love for him by telling the brethren to offend him (face him and demand repentance, and cut him off if he refuses to repent), which was the only thing that *might possibly* save him in the end.

Paul was also demonstrating his love for the rest of the brethren in that assembly because if left unchallenged and unpunished, the leaven (fornication) of that one man would have eventually destroyed that entire church. The Corinthians were not viewing the situation through the eyes of the Spirit. They were moving according to their corrupted emotions and a counterfeit love. So Paul told them their glorying was not good (it was wicked). He asked, don't you realize that a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump? Don't you understand that this one man will corrupt and destroy the *entire assembly* if you allow him to remain among you? Are you willing to sacrifice the *whole church* in order not to offend or lose one member—a member who is now dragging the whole congregation down spiritually? This is not God's love for the sinner; it is a total disregard for the brethren he will eventually hinder.

Then Paul said, “...purge out the old leaven”. He was talking about the man, as well as the spiritual pride that caused them to tolerate his sin. He was saying, “Get rid of that sin; and if you have to get rid of the person who is doing it, then so be it. Do whatever it takes to become *spiritually clean* congregation again”. The Corinthians would never have considered doing this on their own because they had been deceived. Bad doctrine *produces* bad experience. Bad doctrine produces spiritual blindness.

Tolerance of sin is a very powerful and seducing leaven in these days, not only in the local fellowships, but in our own homes as well. I don't want to dwell too much on this subject, but too many times we tolerate, participate in, and encouraging the rebellion of our children in order to *keep peace* in the family. The same is true when it comes to husbands and wives. One spouse will accept the carnality or the wickedness of the other spouse in order to keep peace in the home. They may think this is the love of God, but in many cases it's just plain old compromise. In the end, they are insuring the damnation of their loved ones by letting them slide *peacefully* and *comfortably* into perdition. Better to live in a “war zone” with wicked family members than to compromise for the sake of peace. That's why Jesus said: “*And a man's foes shall be they of his own household* (Matt. 10:36). Do you think He said that for no reason?

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing...For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? **This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.***

*Galatians 5:1-2 & 6-9*

Here, leaven represents *Jewish legalism*. It represents the persuasion (ie: influence; leaven) of certain believing Jews who had come from Jerusalem for the express purpose of bringing the new Gentile believers back under the Law of Moses. Since they claimed to represent the apostles of the “home church”, the people were listening to them. The Galatians were quickly losing their *liberty* in the Spirit Just a *few* Judaizers brought an *entire* church to the brink of falling from grace. Just a “little leaven” had brought this fellowship to the precipice of destruction.

These believing Jews didn’t come into the fellowship and start denying the virgin birth, or the atonement, or the physical resurrection and so forth. Instead, they perverted gospel message just enough to make it unbalanced—and an unbalanced gospel is *another* gospel. There is an Antichrist *spirit* behind Rabbinic Judaism. That’s why I speak out against observing the Law. That’s why I warn people to stay away from *Messianic* Judaism like the plague. When you get involved in any kind of external legalism, especially Judaism and its variations, you are on your way *out* of God’s grace.

What was Paul’s reaction to the problem of people trying to introduce Judaism back into the Church? Did he tell the Galatians to *submit* to these brethren because, after all, they were ministers from the head church at Jerusalem? Did he tell the brethren not to *fuss over doctrine* with them because, after all, contention over doctrine is what was causing all the trouble in the first place? Did he tell them to make sure they *don’t let* doctrine divide them because after all, we are all God’s people; we are all part of the body of Christ; we are all on the same path, aren’t we? Did he tell them to just love one another? Not exactly.

*And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. **I would they were even cut off which trouble you.***

*Galatians 5:11-12*

This is a very interesting verse because many translators believe Paul was talking about *much more* than just getting these people out of the congregation. Many think Paul was actually wishing that they would *castrate* themselves—that’s how upset he was in his spirit. *You* would be upset like Paul was too, if you labored to bring a couple of dozen people to salvation, and then a few months later, some Mormons came among them and were on the verge of convincing them that Mormonism is the true religion!

That’s about what was happening to these new Gentile believers. Judaism is *not* the gospel—and those who get involved with it *after* they have been born again are no different than if they went and joined a Mormon church. The Judaizers who came to Galatia were (without realizing it) intent on leading these new

converts right out of Christ and into eternal perdition. They were intent on getting them to place their trust in circumcision and the Law for justification, along with Christ, rather than placing their trust in Christ *alone*. If a situation like that doesn't *stir* your spirit up and move you to action, nothing will! This is that one line of Paul is translated in some other versions:

**(American Standard Version)** *I would that they that unsettle you would even **go beyond circumcision**.*

**(New American Standard Version)** *Would that those who are troubling you would even **mutilate themselves**.*

**(New International Version)** *As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and **emasculate themselves!***

**(Analytical-Literal Translation)** *O that the ones agitating you would also **castrate themselves!***

**(The Amplified Bible)** *I wish those who unsettle and confuse you would [go all the way and] **cut themselves off!***

**(Contemporary English Version)** *I wish that everyone who is upsetting you would not only get circumcised, but would **cut off much more!***

**(English Majority Text Version)** *Oh that those who disturb you would even **castrate themselves!***

**(English Standard Version)** *I wish those who unsettle you would **emasculate themselves!***

**(Good News Bible)** *I wish that the people who are upsetting you would go all the way; let them go on and **castrate themselves!***

**(International Standard Version)** *I wish that those who are unsettling you would **castrate themselves!***

**(NET Bible)** *I wish those agitators would go so far as to castrate themselves!*

**(Weymouth New Testament)** *Would to God that those who are unsettling your faith would even **mutilate themselves**.*

Have you ever felt your spirit stirred so strongly when you see brothers and sister in Christ being deceived, that you just can't hold your tongue? Have you ever felt the *fire* of the God of Sinai in your bones so powerfully that you knew you would die if you *didn't* speak out?

Most of today's Christians know nothing of this kind of a spiritual walk; so they think Paul just over-reacted and let himself get in "the flesh". But the fact is, when Paul said he wished these Judaizers would castrate themselves, he was in the spirit! That was *God* talking *through* him! He was in the flesh about as much as *Jesus* was in the flesh when He called the religious leaders of vipers and said they could never escape the

damnation of Hell. Paul was fighting for the *souls* of those people. When you are in a battle for someone's soul, there's no room and no time for "politically correct" religion. When you are in a battle for someone's soul, there's no time to play this "*can't-we-all-just-get-along*" game that all of today's churches are playing. There's no time for compromise. There's no time to sit around and politely "dialog" over a cup of coffee about the situation. There needs to be earnest and intense prayer going up to the throne; there needs to be war going on in the spirit realm; there needs to be a Holy Ghost boldness coming forth; and there needs to be confrontation. That's why Paul came on so strong. He knew what the stakes were.

There are other kinds of leaven we could look at, but I want to move on. After the seven days of unleavened bread came the Day of First Fruits. Under the first covenant, the idea of first fruits was that everything belongs to God, so His people were to acknowledge this by offering Him the *first fruits* of their life and their labor. The firstborn of both man and beast were offered to the Lord (*Ex. 13:2,22:29*). Also, the first fruits of all the earth or harvests were offered to the Lord (*Deut. 26:1-11*). This is also where the concept of the "tithe" comes from. But the tithe wasn't money. It was food and animals.

On the Day of First Fruits, when the harvest of barley and wheat were ready to be reaped, the person would take *one sheaf* from the stalks and bring it to the priest. That lone sheaf was called "the sheaf of the first fruits". The priest would then take this one sheaf and wave it before the Lord. This is a perfect picture of the resurrection of Jesus.

*Then saith he unto his disciples, **The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.***

*Matthew 9:37-38*

*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, **Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.***

*John 4:35*

When Jesus said these words to the disciples, He was talking about the people of Israel. Messiah had come and a "harvest" of the Jewish people into the kingdom was ordained by God at that time. However, just as in the natural Old Testament feast, a single sheaf of grain had to be plucked and offered before the Lord, so the fulfillment of that type and shadow had to be in this manner. Before the harvest of the nation, a single, fully matured sheaf which represented the crop (nation) had to be offered to the Lord.

That "sheaf" was Jesus. Jesus was the Passover Lamb. He was pure and sinless; avoiding all spiritual leaven during His spiritual seven-day journey on earth. He was the first sheaf of the harvest of Israel. He was the first to rise from the dead. That's why Paul said: "...*now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept*" (*I. Cor. 15:20*); and again: "*But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits...*" (*I. Cor. 15:23*).

Some other "firsts" that are connected with Jesus being the First Fruits, are:

- ~ Jesus is the firstborn of Mary (Matthew 1:23-25)
- ~ Jesus is the first-begotten of God the Father (Hebrews 1:6)
- ~ Jesus is the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15)
- ~ Jesus is the first-begotten from the dead (Revelation 1:5)
- ~ Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29)
- ~ Jesus is the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14)
- ~ Jesus is the preeminent One (Colossians 1:18)

We partake of first fruits when we are born again because the first part of our being—which is our spirit—is raised from death and joined to the Lord. The resurrection of our spirits is a foretaste of the rest of the harvest. As we learn to live free of leaven, the soul is renewed and begins to experience that resurrection life as well. When the Lord returns, our *body* will partake of this resurrection life. Thus, the whole person will have been harvested into the kingdom of God.

Before I end tonight, I would like to say a little something about the question of whether or we should be celebrating Easter. I'm very aware that most of the things that are connected with the Easter holiday are pagan in origin. But I just want to give everyone a friendly warning. Be careful how you judge people who choose to celebrate the Lord's resurrection on this day. Not all of them involve themselves with the *pagan aspects* of the holiday. Not all of them have Easter Egg Hunts and decorate their homes and yards with Easter Bunnies and serve Hot Cross Buns. I have known people who truly honor God by their worship and recognition of the Lord's resurrection on this day. Sometimes they have a little song service in a home meeting setting or something like that.

It's easy to get self-righteous when you think you are doing everything just the way God ordained it, but all those other Christians are not doing things "by the book" so to speak. But maybe we aren't doing everything correct either. For instance, has anyone taken *communion* today? If you did, I guarantee you, you *didn't* do it according to the Scripture. You didn't do it the way Jesus instructed His people to do it. You didn't even do it the way the early Gentile churches did it. For you see, the Lord's Supper does not consist of just eating a cracker (or some bread) and some wine (or grape juice) during, or at the end of, a church service. The Lord's Supper is an *actual* meal, during which, the bread and the wine are taken in remembrance of the Lord's death. That meal was not just *any* meal. It was the Passover meal.

*And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat **this passover** with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: **this do in remembrance of me**. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

*Luke 22:15-20*

Check the other accounts of this event (*Matt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24*) and you will see that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper *during* the Passover meal. Matthew said: "...*as they were eating, Jesus took the bread...*". Mark said: "*And as they did eat, Jesus took the bread...*". Thus, what we commonly refer to as "communion" was instituted as a part of the Jewish Passover meal.

Jesus was telling His fellow Jews that from that point on, whenever they celebrate Passover, they are to celebrate it for a *different* reason. No longer are they to celebrate it as a memorial of the nation being delivered from the power of Egypt and Pharaoh. They were to celebrate it in its *reality*. Although the natural deliverance of Israel from Egypt was a literal, historical event, it was really just a picture of something else under the New Covenant. That something else was the sacrifice of Jesus, and the new birth experience that would be available to His people *as the result* of that sacrifice.

What Jesus was doing that evening was revamping the whole first part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the middle of the Passover meal, He instituted a new ritual—taking bread and wine—which changes the whole focus and reason for the Passover meal. Now the focus is on the *true* Lamb of God and His death. Now the focus is on *true* deliverance from sin. That is the *Scriptural* way to take communion.

Somewhere along the way, the Gentiles created their own *Gentile version* of a Jewish Passover meal, *during* which, they took the bread and the wine in remembrance of the Lord's death. But that Gentile version still *resembled* the original event. People didn't eat crackers and drink grape juice during a Sunday morning church service! It was called a "love feast"—sort of like a "pot-luck" dinner. Everyone brought something and they had a *fellowship meal*. In that context, the bread and the wine were taken.

When Paul wrote to the church about the abuses that were taking place during these love feasts, he didn't say: "*Brethren, don't you know you are doing this all wrong? Don't you know the only correct way to partake of the Lord's Supper is within a the Jewish Passover meal on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan? Unless you are going take communion by the book, unless you are going to do it during the Jewish feast of Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, you really shouldn't even be taking bread and wine because you are just making up your own religious traditions as you go along*".

Paul would never say such a thing because he didn't want to entangle the Gentile believers in the Jewish Law. Apparently he bore witness to the fact that God was allowing them to do a Gentile version of the Jewish Passover meal, during which they took the bread and the wine. Therefore, all he did was reiterate what transpired that Passover evening, and then correct the *abuses* that were taking place in that church. He left those people *free* to celebrate their *Gentile Version* of the original, Jewish Passover/Communion meal. That's the attitude we should have towards those who celebrate the Lord's resurrection on Easter, *if* they are not mixing all the pagan *accessories* with it.

## **pascha (pas'-khah)**

### **Strong's #3957**

#### *(The Day & The Meal)*

Matthew 26:2—Ye know that after two days is the feast of **the passover**, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

#### *(The Meal)*

Matthew 26:17—Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to **eat the passover**?

#### *(The Meal)*

Matthew 26:18—And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will **keep the passover at thy house** with my disciples.

#### *(The Meal)*

Matthew 26:19—And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they **made ready the passover**.

#### *(The Day & The Meal)*

Mark 14:1—After two days was the feast of **the passover**, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

#### *(The Day & The Meal)*

Mark 14:12—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**?

#### *(The Meal)*

Mark 14:14—And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall **eat the passover** with my disciples?

#### *(The Meal)*

Mark 14:16—And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they **made ready the passover**.

#### *(The Festival—including the Day & The Meal)*

Luke 2:41—Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at **the feast of the passover**.

#### *(The Festival—including the Day & The Meal)*

Luke 22:1—Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, **which is called the Passover**.

#### *(The Day & The Meal)*

Luke 22:7—Then came the day of unleavened bread, when **the passover must be killed**.

*(The Meal)*

Luke 22:8—And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us **the passover**, that we may eat.

*(The Meal)*

Luke 22:11—And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall **eat the passover** with my disciples?

*(The Meal)*

Luke 22:13—And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and **they made ready the passover**.

*(The Meal)*

Luke 22:15—And he said unto them, With desire I have desired **to eat this passover** with you before I suffer: (KJV)

*(The Festival—including the Day & The Meal)*

John 2:13—And the **Jews' passover** was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

*(The Day & The Meal)*

John 2:23—Now when he was in Jerusalem **at the passover**, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

*(The Festival—including the Day & The Meal)*

John 6:4—And **the passover**, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

*(The Festival—including the Day & The Meal)*

John 11:55—And **the Jews' passover was nigh** at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before **the passover**, to purify themselves.

*(The Day & The Meal)*

John 12:1—Then Jesus six days before **the passover** came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

*(The Meal)*

John 13:1—Now before **the feast of the passover**, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

*(The Meal)*

John 18:28—Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might **eat the passover**.

*(The Festival)*

*John 18:39—But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one **at the passover**: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*

*(The Day)*

*John 19:14—And it was **the preparation of the passover**, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*

*(The Festival?)*

*Acts 12:4—And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; **intending after Easter** to bring him forth to the people.*

*(Jesus Represents The Meal)*

*I. Corinthians 5:7—Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even **Christ our passover** is sacrificed for us:*

*(The Meal)*

*Hebrews 11:28—Through faith he **kept the passover**, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.*

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**Tyndale New Testament** translates *pascha* as Easter.

\**ester* = alternate spelling of Easter

\**paschal lamb* = the lamb sacrificed at the first passover.

\**sweet bread* = unleavened bread

*Matthew 26:2—Ye know that after two days shall be **easter**, and the son of man shall be delivered to be crucified.*

*Matthew—26:17-19 The first day of sweet bread the disciples came to Jesus saying unto him: where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the **paschal lamb**? And he said: Go into the city, unto such a man, and say to him, the master saith, my time is at hand, I will keep mine **easter** at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them, and made ready the **easterlamb**.*

*Mark 14:1-2—After two days followed **ester**, and the days of sweet bread. And the high Priests and the Scribes sought means how they might take him by craft and put him to death. But they said: not in **the feast day**, lest any business arise among the people.*

*Mark 12:12-16—And the first day of sweet bread, when men offer the **paschal lamb**, his disciples said unto him: where wilt thou that we go and prepare, that thou mayest eat the **ester lamb**? And he sent forth two of his disciples, and said unto them: Go ye into the city, and there shall a man meet*

*you bearing a pitcher of water, follow him. And whither soever he goeth in, say ye to the good man of the house, the master asketh where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the **ester lamb** with my disciples? And he will show you a great parlour, paved and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth and came to the city and found as he had said unto them: and made ready the **ester lamb**.*

*Luke 2:41—And his father and mother went to Herusalem (Jerusalem) every year at **the feast of ester**.*

*Luke 22:1, 7-8, 11, 13, 15—The feast of sweet bread drew nigh which is called **ester**...Then came the day of sweet bread, when of necessity the **esterlamb** must be offered. And he sent Peter and John saying: Go and prepare us the **esterlamb**, that we may eat. ...and say unto the good man of the house. The master sayeth unto thee: where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat mine **esterlamb** with my disciples?...And they went and found as he had said unto them: and made ready the **esterlamb**...And he said unto them: I have inwardly desired to eat this **esterlamb** with you before that I suffer.*

*John 2:13—And the Jewes **ester** was even at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem*

*John 2:23—When he was at Jerusalem at **ester in the feast**, many believed on his name, when they saw his miracles which he did.*

*John 6:4—And **ester, a feast** of the Jewes, was nigh*

*John 11:55—And the Jewes **ester** was nigh at hand and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the ester, to purify themselves.*

*John 12:1—Then Jesus six days before **ester**, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, which was dead and whom Jesus raised from death.*

*John 13:1—Before the **feast of ester** when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the father: When he loved his which were in the world, unto the end he loved them.*

*John 18:28, 39—Then led they Jesus from Caiphas into the hall of judgement. It was in the morning, and they themselves went not into the judgement hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the **paschal lamb**...Ye have a custom, that I should deliver you one loose at **ester**. Will ye that I loose unto you the king of the Jewes?*

*John 19:14—It was the Saboth even which falleth in the **ester feast**, and about the sixth hour. And he said unto the Jewes: behold your king.*