

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #14

A Night to be Much Observed

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Hello, this is Brother Kenny, founder of LawstSheep Ministries.

In the last program, I described what I do each year to remember the DEATH of our Savior as OUR Passover Lamb. It is what I see commanded in both the Old AND the New Testament. There is NO commanded memorial of the resurrection of Jesus that I have found in the Bible.

Therefore, trying to worship God in spirit and truth, trying to be the kind of worshipper that our Father seeks, our Family Sabbath Keepers fellowship stresses the eating of the symbolic body, and drinking the symbolic blood, of OUR Passover Lamb, Jesus, once each year. Our Passover meal remembrance is not focused on eating the meat of a sacrificed first-year lamb. Of course, we also have a lovely supper with our brethren and visitors. The adults humbly wash one another's feet as Jesus commanded us by His very own example at His last supper with His brethren.

This special observation includes the children. The supper and holy convocation worship takes about three hours. It truly is a night to be remembered each year! While this night of worship rivals and exceeds anything I used to experience at an Easter mass or resurrection service, it is just the BEGINNING of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. In this program, I will describe the meaning and worship of this commanded annual Feast of the LORD.

Let's start with exactly what God commanded His chosen people, the children of Israel, to do. We find it in Ex. 12: 14-20:

So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day to the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them, but that which everyone must eat---that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day, I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.

That is quite a mouthful! And, if you are like me, when you first come across such seemingly strange commands, you have many questions about God's meanings and purpose. I will try to cover the more obvious questions today and also next week.

Perhaps the first question to ask is, "Were these commands meant only for Israelites, or are Christians to also observe this feast?" Israel was God's first chosen nation. It had a geographical land context as well. We know that Israel was also the God-given name for a chosen race of people. They are the progeny of Jacob, renamed Israel, by God. Jacob's father was Isaac and his grandfather was Abraham. It is to this racial line of people that God made many incredible prophecies. These Israelites were to keep God's commands forever, or technically, until the originally created heavens and earth pass away!

Of course, Jacob had twelve sons. They, and their progeny, are called the twelve tribes of Israel. And, the nation, or kingdom, of Israel, eventually split in two. The Northern Kingdom was called the House of Israel. It included what are called the Lost Ten Tribes as they were taken captive and scattered throughout the Persian Empire about 722 BC.

The Southern Kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital, had primarily the tribes of Judah and Benjamin along with some from the tribe of Levi who was dispersed among all twelve tribes. Eventually, this Southern Kingdom, the house of Judah, was also overtaken and exiled in Babylon for seventy years.

Now, Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. Jesus, was an Israelite. He observed the Feasts of the LORD all His life. He became our Passover Lamb. Did Jesus, the Son of God, having come to earth as the Messiah of Israel, teach His disciples that the Feasts of the LORD and their annual Sabbaths had now been done away by His coming? No, there is not one word like that spoken by the Lord of the Sabbath. His weekly and annual Sabbaths of rest and holy convocation had NOT been done away for His disciples. In fact, His Apostles also kept these Feasts and Sabbaths of the LORD.

If the Feasts of the LORD were done away by Jesus, then Peter never got the message. It was at the Feast of Pentecost that God used Peter to add 3,000 souls to the Church of God! It was at the Feast of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit of God, our Comforter, came to dwell in the hearts of the humans who would believe in God's Son. Jesus made it clear that He had to ascend to Heaven to be with His Father in order for God's Holy Spirit to descend from heaven to dwell in the new spiritual body, called the Church of God. The Church of God is headed by Jesus. Jesus is the Great Shepherd of the sheep of God.

Later, we find Peter being arrested by King Herod when he was in Jerusalem DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread after the ascension of Jesus. Herod was, according to Acts 12: 1 harassing the CHURCH and had killed the Apostle James! This pleased the Jews who were not in the Church headed by Jesus, the so-called Christians, the people of God whether Jew or Gentile. It was the CHURCH that was keeping the Feasts of the LORD originally commanded to Israel. Can it be any more clear?

And, if the Feasts of the LORD were done away with the first coming of Jesus, then the Apostle Paul also missed the message. Saul, whose name was changed to Paul by Jesus Himself, was named the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was a Hebrew, an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin of the House of Judah. So, it would be logical that Paul would continue to keep and teach the Feast of Unleavened Bread after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

Perhaps this Apostle to the Gentiles, hand-picked by Jesus Himself, was told by Jesus to stop teaching this commanded feast of the LORD to the Gentiles? Well, then why were the believers at Corinth, clearly including both Jews and Gentiles, told by Paul in 1Cor. 5 to “Let us keep the feast!”

There is no doubt about what feast Paul was talking about to the largely Greek and Gentile Church at Corinth--the “us” in who should keep the feast. Due to his references to leaven, the Passover, and later to the night Jesus was betrayed, we know this observance was related to more than a celebration of the meal he called the Lord’s supper.

Paul had to admonish the Corinthians for keeping the feast in ways that were neither commanded nor pleasing to God. The gentile Christians were clearly taught by Paul to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread decades after Jesus had ascended to heaven. And, as Christians, they continued to keep this annual Feast of the LORD. So do I! I keep it as God commanded, but in harmony with the changes in its meaning and practice found in the admonishments that Jesus and Paul provided to us in Scripture.

Could it be that Jesus and Paul kept the Feasts of the LORD ONLY because they were Israelites, now called Jews? Were the only people still keeping the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread in Corinth a few Jewish brethren that may have been among them? Well, I suggest you read 1Cor. 16 to see all the Greek brethren whom Paul edified.

In Acts 20: 16, we find Paul not only still preaching and keeping the Feasts of the LORD, wherever he was living, he says the following about returning in a hurry to Jerusalem to keep the Day of Pentecost:

For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

We also find Paul in Greece staying and preaching there for three months. We see Paul preaching to Gentiles in Corinth on the Sabbath. Apparently the weekly Sabbath also had not been done away for the followers of Jesus. And, we even find the Apostle Paul noting that he sailed from Philippi, a Roman colony, and the first church planted in Europe, after the Days of Unleavened Bread. There were so few Jews at Philippi, there apparently was not even a synagogue there.

In 1Cor. 8, we find Paul planning to tarry in Ephesus “until Pentecost.” Why would Paul

mark his travel itinerary and plans two decades after Jesus ascended to heaven using Old Testament holy days if they were no longer relevant to the Gentile Christians he was preaching to in Greece and Rome? How could they understand his travel schedule and plans if they did not know and keep the appointed times for the Feasts and Holy days of the LORD?

I always get a bit defensive when accused of keeping the Feasts of the LORD as if I am under the Old Covenant and keeping the law of Moses. I am not. No way. These are the feasts of the LORD and the holy days that Jesus and Paul kept and preached to the Gentile church of Jesus. What I stopped doing is keeping holidays like Easter Sunday which Jesus or Paul never kept or taught anyone (Gentile or Jew) to keep holy.

I best move on to some other interesting questions about the command by God to His people to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. One question is, "Why is the feast seven days long?" God does not give us a clear answer. I do not believe we need to know His reasons for the commands He gives. If God said, "Do this!" it seems adequate for me. A good example for this is when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Did Abraham insist God explain His rather onerous command to him? Or, did Abraham simply obey God?

But, still, I can't help but wonder about the seven days. I do have an idea about the seven days. I'll try to explain it briefly. The Feasts of the Lord, especially this spring feast, were given by God to the children of Israel to REMEMBER His deliverance of His people FROM bondage in Egypt. God indeed set His people free. It was His power and mighty right hand that made it happen, including the ten plagues and the slaying of the first born of Egypt. Pharaoh finally consented to the plea of Moses to, "Let my people GO!."

If the death of Jesus is addressed on the First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, what are we to be REMEMBERING for the next six days? Well, consider this. God also delivered His people TO a place called the Promised Land. So, what were the children of Israel doing the next seven days after they saw the miracle of the saving blood of the Passover lamb and were told to leave FROM Egypt?

The incredible answers are easily found right in our Bible. And, the stories told after the Exodus are so inspiring they also bear repeating each year as a remembrance. Not just for our benefit, but for our children and those keeping the Passover Feast for the first time. But, who is going to tell you these great stories? Will a minister preach on them for your edification on Easter Sunday? If all you concentrate on is the resurrection of Jesus one day each year, when are you going to consider all the other wonderful things that God did for the children of Israel and recorded for YOU; as one of the adopted children of God?

Consider this teaching from the New Testament found in 2Tim. 3: 16 to 4: 1-5:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

I confess to you that this is how I perceive this element of LawstSheep Ministries and this Lord of the Sabbath Program. The Scripture that God breathed and inspired about the exodus of Israel is profitable for our doctrine and teaching about God's will for His people---for all His children! Surely, Israel and the exodus was a precursor and a shadow of things to come. But, the true Jew is one circumcised in the heart says the Bible. The Passover lamb of the Exodus became our Passover Lamb for the people of God, both Jew and Gentile. All the feasts of the LORD are indeed physical shadows of the coming reality of Jesus. We are also being led to our promised Land, a new Jerusalem! Amen, brethren?

Notice the reference to "in season" and "out of season." The inspired words translated as season or seasons are often referring to the appointed times or seasonal feasts of the LORD, not to periods like spring or winter. This implies that we can learn much about God, His will, and His Son, by understanding the appointed feasts and days of the LORD. These stories and events that are linked with the Feasts of the LORD and Israel are profitable for our Christian understanding about God and the future of all mankind.

I realize how our ears itch when religious times such as Easter and Christmas come around. But, most true believers admit how these holidays have become watered down in their relationship to Jesus and God. It troubles their spirit. These holidays have become worldly and secular where hardly a thought about Jesus enters our mind; or our worship. So, let us continue our study of the Exodus and its valuable teachings for us Christians who follow Jesus; the true substance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In Ex. 13: 6-10 is a good example for our instruction in the value of keeping the Feasts of the LORD:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, "This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt. It shall be a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

Notice that the LORD'S law is to be in our mouth. What law? How about the law given to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai, including the remembrance feasts?

I hope that you more avid Bible readers will recognize the similarity of the sign of the leavened bread compared to what those who will keep the "mark" or sign of the beast, along with the kings of the earth, in end-time prophecy of the return of the Lamb of God as King of kings. We see this in Rev. 13: 16 concerning a beast that is LIKE a lamb:

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Is this similar language a coincident? Brethren, I urge to study the meaning of the Anti-Christ, who will appear as a peaceful lamb initially. Do remember that the "666" mark of the beast may be on ones forehead (between your eyes). It may well have a link here to what is revealed in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Notice too that right after this verse in Revelation, the next chapter, Chapter 14, relates to a Lamb standing on Mt. Zion and with Him one-hundred and forty-four thousand having His Father's name written on their foreheads. Oh, this prophecy is exciting and gains meaning from the Feasts of the LORD.

I simply can't go into such important prophetic implications from the Feasts of the LORD at this time. But, I do believe with all my heart that God intended to warn and inform His people who keep and understand His feasts about what is to come upon the world and what His plan for man's salvation really is. The secular and quasi-religious world will not understand. It is my hope that after the fall feast, I will turn these programs to studies that help reveal the future role of the Lord of the Sabbath in God's plan of salvation. This information can be found no other way in my humble opinion. Lacking such knowledge helps explain why there are so many different guesses at prophecy of the end times about being "Left Behind."

Well, back to the Exodus story and the things we can learn during the seven days of eating the unleavened bread starting with the initial Passover meal. The next major event is what happened when God intentionally led His people out into the wilderness of the Red Sea, or more accurately, the Reed Sea. This was not the most direct way to travel to the Promised Land. God had a reason. Do you have any idea why? Do you even consider this miraculous crossing of the Red Sea as a story worthy of a father to tell his children each year? Or, is seeing the classic movie Exodus with Charlton Heston once in a lifetime sufficient for this incredible miracle of God? Is it any wonder it is considered a fable by people in the world?

God intentionally tricks Pharaoh into thinking he can come and trap the fleeing Israelites in the wilderness and bring them back into Egypt as slaves. But, God had a special plan, a reason not evident to either Pharaoh or to Moses and the fleeing Israelites. And, God recorded the story that we may know more about the God we serve and trust for our own

deliverance through blood of our Passover Lamb. Are you listening?

You hopefully know the rest of the story. How, despite God having saved the life of the first born sons of Israel by the blood of His prescribed innocent lamb, God killed the first born of the Egyptians, even the son of Pharaoh. Pharaoh and his army of 600 chariots were soon bearing down on the Israelites again. All Israel had left Rameses in boldness and even spoiled their former slave masters of their treasures. Would they not be afraid this time? Would they now trust God and simply do as He says to be saved?

No. They were afraid AGAIN. Being between the “devil and the deep blue sea,” they were ready to return to Egypt rather than to die in the wilderness. Now, are you getting the full picture that God gave to us? Can you see that just because the Lamb of God has shed His blood to save us from death, we still have to continue to believe in Him and trust Him and obey Him even when Satan threatens us and makes us fearful and uncertain in our salvation?

My friends, if you have bought into the false teachings surrounding eternal security, and once-saved-always-saved, you need to study the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Perhaps then you will see what Scripture is actually teaching. If you think you can live as you please, and ignore God's commands and power, and just count on the shed blood of Jesus to save you anyway, no matter how much you still sin and love it besides, this Feast will be a God-send to you. For many will do things in the name of Jesus, whom He will not save. It is only those Jesus knows AND who do the will of His Father, who will be saved. Do not be deceived!

Then, before their very eyes, as the Red Sea not only parts to allow the children of Israel to cross to the other side, God shows them the SALVATION of the LORD. Pharaoh and his army are drowned and their bodies washed ashore. And, in Ex. 14: 13-14, we have Moses revealing the incredible power of God to His people so they might believe in Him:

And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

Isn't this incredible, brethren? Can you relate this to how we can keep and hold our peace trusting in God to fight for us through Jesus? Do you see the connection to “blessed are the peacemakers?” Can you live each day trusting in God and the sacrifice of His only Son to save us from the penalty of sin; which is eternal DEATH? And, though the Exodus is a physical story, we can relate it all spiritually to a deliverance of our soul saved unto an eternal life as a resurrected spirit being with God and our Savior forever.

These Old Testament stories give us a foretaste of the future that we can glean from these shadows that reveal the true power and glory that will some day be ours in Christ, Jesus.

A little further study of the crossing of the Red Sea helps reveal to us even a form of water baptism that we need in order to truly live in Christ. We need to die to sin and come out of the watery grave as a new man, baptized into Christ and with the Holy Spirit of God melded into our spirit ready for our own good works.

Oh, please, do not be deceived and think that those who want to be children of God, and inherit eternal life, have absolutely nothing they need to do in this life. How many times have you heard it said, Christ did it all for you! Did He? Is there nothing you should do for Him? Does He not insist that you repent of your sin and overcome your old carnal nature? Does He not insist that you be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit?

These are not things that earn you salvation apart from the grace and power of God that was first showed His people at the Red Sea. Peter understood the will of God in these things. He told us what WE need to DO in Acts 2: 37-38:

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord God will call."

Don't believe me, my friend, but please believe Peter. If you are being called by God to salvation in Christ, Jesus now, tune in next week. I will continue with two other incredible miracles of God following the Exodus of Israel to teach us His will and way for us to live during the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.