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THE PASSOVER AND MATTHEW 26:17 & MARK 14:12 & LUKE 22:7 EXPLAINED

From Leviticus 23:5-6 we understand quite clearly that the Passover is to be observed at the start of the 14th day of the 1st month, and that the Seven Day Feast of Unleavened Bread starts on the 15th day of the 1st month. This is discussed at length in some of my previous articles like "When Should We Observe the Passover?" and "The Talmud Proves It ... The Old Testament Passover Was at the Beginning of Nisan 14th". The actual timing for the Passover should be quite clear.

But how are we to understand the statements made in Matthew 26:17 and in Mark 14:12 and in Luke 22:7?

Here are these three verses.

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**? (Matthew 26:17)

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**? (Mark 14:12)

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

All three of these verses speak about an event on the day **before** Jesus Christ kept the Passover, since this was spoken before sunset and the Passover was only observed after sunset. The implication of these verses seems to be that the Feast of Unleavened Bread starts with, or even precedes, the observance of the Passover? Yet such a situation would assuredly be in conflict with the clear and unambiguous instructions found in Leviticus 23:5-6.

So what is the correct understanding for these particular verses? To understand this correctly, we should take a step back and examine the greater context of the Passover. And we need to understand why the 14th day is not "holy time", contrary to what some people believe and teach. Some people have used the above verses to incorrectly infer a "holy time" status for the 14th day.

NOT ALL RELIGIOUS DAYS ARE THE SAME

People in the world may understand that from a religious perspective most days in the year are simply "ordinary days", or "common days"; and that some days in the year (be they weekly or annual) have a certain religious significance, that they are "religious days". However, other churches don't understand that the "religious days" outlined in the Bible actually fall into **three completely different categories**. In the Bible God has made a clear distinction between these different categories of religious days, by using different Hebrew words and certain qualifying expressions to identify them. This is something people in the world have never understood.

Even many scholars and Bible translators have not grasped the differences between these different categories of religious days. That is why they have indiscriminately translated two different Hebrew words as if they are synonyms. They most assuredly are **not synonyms**! But the fact that translators

have treated these two Hebrew words as if they are synonyms **proves** their lack of discernment in this matter. And a lack of correct understanding in this regard will only result in **more** confusion in the translations and explanations they have produced.

Here are the facts.

In the Old Testament God was very specific in identifying the different categories of religious days. **ALL THE DAYS GOD WANTS US TO OBSERVE IN THE YEAR ARE IDENTIFIED IN LEVITICUS 23**.

There are no days or occasions in the year which God wants us to observe, but which are not mentioned in Leviticus 23. If a day or an occasion (e.g. a new moon) is not specifically mentioned in Leviticus 23, then it is **not** something that God expects us to take note of as a religious observance of any kind.

However, here is something we should also consider.

All the days in the year that God wants us to observe are identified by the Hebrew word "mow'ed". All of them are "mow'ed days" or "mow'ed occasions". But we need to understand that before God **NOT ALL "MOW'ED" DAYS ARE EQUAL**!

To be quite clear:

Every single day or occasion that God wants us to observe is a "mow'ed". But not all "mow'eds" are in the same category of observances. It is vital that we understand exactly what God means when He speaks about "My mow'eds". So let's see if we can pinpoint what this word actually means.

In Leviticus 23 God Almighty spoke to Moses. God's purpose in this specific situation was to clearly spell out to Moses and to Israel **all the days and occasions** that God expects His people to observe in the course of a year.

In verse 2 God told Moses:

"*Concerning* **the feasts** (**mow'ed**) of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* **my feasts** (**mow'ed**)."

This is clearly an introductory statement for the information that follows. And verse 44 is equally clearly a concluding statement.

"And Moses declared unto the children of Israel **the feasts** (**mow'ed**) **of the LORD**."

The only days and occasions in the year that God expects His people to observe are encapsulated between verses 2 and 44 of Leviticus 23. And every single occasion that is mentioned between verses 2 and 44 is a "mow'ed" occasion; that's what verse 44 tells us in plain words. And any occasions (e.g. new moons) that are not specifically mentioned between verses 2 and 44 are also NOT a part of "the mow'eds of God".

So let's now look at the meaning of the Hebrew word "mow'ed".

THE WORD "MOW'ED" IN LEVITICUS 23

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (**TWOT**) gives the basic meaning of this word

"**mow'ed**" as: **an appointed time or place**, **but without regard to the purpose for this designation**. Without further qualifications this word can refer to such diverse things as the coming of a plague (Exodus 9:5), the season of a bird's migration (Jeremiah 8:7), the time for the birth of a child (Genesis 21:2), an appointed signal between two parties (Judges 20:38), and the tabernacle or tent of the congregation of Israel (Exodus 27:21; etc.). It is always something that is "appointed".

We need to be careful that we don't read any specific meaning into this Hebrew word, because **without additional qualifications** this word "mow'ed" simply does not have an automatic religious meaning! Used on its own it does not mean either "feast" or "Holy Day". Used on its own this word may refer to nothing more than "an appointed time or place". To be quite clear here:

On its own the Hebrew word "mow'ed" has no clearly defined religious significance! It is the **added qualifications** that are explicitly stated in a given context (i.e. in Leviticus 23) which establish a religious significance for this Hebrew word.

In this regard the most common added qualifications that identify "mow'ed" with a religious significance are:

1) The "mow'ed" is in some way defined as "God's mow'ed".

2) The "mow'ed" is defined as "a holy convocation".

3) No work is to be done on this "mow'ed".

Now not all three of these added qualifications apply to every "mow'ed" that is listed in Leviticus 23. But it is these added qualifications that set the particular "mow'ed" occasions in Leviticus 23 apart from one another, as well as setting all of them apart from the very general uses of the word "mow'ed" found in other contexts.

However, one thing needs to be clearly understood:

In the Old Testament the word **"mow'ed" does NOT mean "a feast"**!

In the Old Testament the word "mow'ed" on its own refers to nothing more than an appointed time or place. The focus is that something is appointed to happen or to be done. But this "something" does not automatically have any specific religious meaning. We need to be careful that we don't ascribe any unwarranted meanings, like "feast", etc. to this word "mow'ed".

Here is the key to understanding Leviticus 23 correctly:

1) When an occasion is **identified ONLY as God's "mow'ed"** (i.e "My mow'ed" or "the mow'eds of the Eternal"), but without any of the other two above listed added qualifications, **THEN IT IS ONLY THE SPECIFIC OCCASION ITSELF THAT IS TO BE OBSERVED**! The particular day on which this occasion is to be observed is not significant as a whole. It is the specific occasion, and not the whole day that is identified as significant. The rest of that day, outside of the specified activity is freely available for any other lawful activities (work, recreation, etc.).

Note! It is the last two of the above three added qualifications that extend the instructions to cover the whole day in question. It is the instructions of **"a holy convocation**" and "**no work**" that make clear that **the whole day** that is being discussed is affected by what is being spelled out. So when the instructions "a holy convocation" and "no work" are **omitted**, then the focus is only on a very specific activity at a specific time on a specific day; and the rest of that day is not affected.

THE PASSOVER is the only occasion in this category. It is "an appointed time" (compare to "when the hour was come" in Luke 22:14) in the same way as the very general non-religious "appointed times" that are elsewhere in the Old Testament also identified by the word "mow'ed", except that the Passover is also identified as "God's mow'ed". But outside of the instructions that apply to the observance of the Passover, no added instructions apply! Specifically, the 14th day is neither a feast day nor is it a Holy Day. It is not the day that is important regarding the 14th. It is only the very specific activity intended for a very specific part of that day, that is important. The rest of the day has no more significance than any other day of the year. This is something we need to understand.

2) When a "mow'ed day" is intended to be seen as **a Holy Day** (the most common religious use for this word, apart from references to the tabernacle of the congregation), then both of the following **two added qualifications must be specifically mentioned** for this "mow'ed day". Thus, it must specifically state that this "mow'ed day" is "a holy convocation" (therefore a Holy Day), and that "no work" is to be done on this "mow'ed day". If these two specific qualifications are not stated for a "mow'ed day", then that "mow'ed day" is **not** a Holy Day!

Note! These two added qualifications (a holy convocation and no work to be done) do not identify "a feast"! They only identify a Holy Day. The only time these two qualifications also apply to "a feast" is if that "feast" (or some specific day during a 7-day feast) is at the same time also a Holy Day.

The following are the only "**Holy Days**" that are set apart in the Bible; all of them are explicitly referred to as "holy convocations" and "no work is to be done". They are:

- the weekly Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3)

- The 1st Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:7)

- The 7th Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:8)

- The Feast Day of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:21)

- The Day of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25)

- The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-28)

- The 1st Day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:35)

- The Last Great Day (Leviticus 23:36)

Notice that the weekly Sabbath is before God in exactly the same category of "mow'ed occasions" as are the annual Holy Days ... same requirements and same observances.

Every day in the above list is clearly identified by two additional qualifications: it is "a holy convocation", and "no work is to be done". People who refer to the weekly Sabbaths, the Day of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement as "feast days" don't really understand what God means by "a feast day", because these specific days are assuredly NOT feast days. They are only identified as "Holy Days". "Feast" is an extremely unfortunate mistranslation for the Hebrew word "mow'ed".

3) When a "mow'ed occasion" is to be recognized as **a Feast**, then AN ADDITIONAL HEBREW WORD **must** be used to describe these "mow'ed days" or "mow'ed periods". **That** additional **Hebrew word is** "**chag**". Unless this word "chag" is specifically used for the "mow'ed occasion" under consideration, then

it cannot be "a feast". "Chag" is the correct Hebrew word for "feast".

Put another way: A day or a period of days that is defined by the word "chag" is a specific category of "mow'ed days" or "mow'ed occasions", because it is also an appointed day or period of days. But without the "chag" designation any "mow'ed day" can never be a feast. It is not the word "mow'ed" that determines the feast status of a day; the feast status of any day (or period of days) is established **exclusively** by the word "chag".

There are three annual feasts listed in the law of God, and **only three**. They are:

- The Seven Day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6)

- The One Day Feast of Pentecost (Exodus 23:16; Exodus 34:22; Deut 16:10)

- The Seven Day Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34, 39, 41)

[COMMENT: Any feasts or commemorative occasions that were established after Leviticus chapter 23 are not binding on the people of God. While their observance may not necessarily be wrong (e.g. Purim in Esther 9, feast of dedication in John 10:22, some kind of new moon observance, etc.), neither is their observance in any way binding on the people of God. If the observance or commemoration is not found in Leviticus 23, then it is not something God expects us to observe in this age.]

NOTE! While the word "chag" is not used for Pentecost in Leviticus 23, it is clearly used for Pentecost in the other Scriptures I have listed above. Being a 1-day observance, it is **the "mow'ed" aspect of Pentecost** that is highlighted in Leviticus 23, while **its status as a feast** is the focus in Deuteronomy 16 and Exodus 23 and 34. And any instruction found in the Bible before the end of the Book of Deuteronomy is a part of THE LAW OF GOD! Pentecost had already been defined as a "chag" before Leviticus 23 (i.e. in Exodus 23 and 34), and it is again defined as a "chag" after Leviticus 23 (i.e. in Deuteronomy 16); so the omission of the word "chag" for Pentecost in Leviticus 23 is simply a change in focus on this specific feast, not a denial of its "chag" status.

The omission of the word "chag" for Pentecost in Leviticus 23 illustrates one other point that many people in God's Church may not have considered. And that is this:

For all four days in the year (i.e. 1st Day UB, 7th Day UB, Pentecost, and 1st Day FoT) that have both, the status of being a feast day and the status of being a Holy Day, **it is always the instructions for the Holy Days that take precedence over the instructions for the feast days!**

It is more important that we treat the **1st Day of UB** as a Holy Day, than that we treat it as a feast day. It is more important that we treat the **7th Day of UB** as a Holy Day than that we treat it as a feast day. And it is more important that we treat **Pentecost** as a Holy Day than that we treat Pentecost as a feast day. And it is also more important that we treat the **1st Day of FoT** as a Holy Day than that we treat it as a feast day. And it is more important that we treat the **weekly Sabbath** days DURING UB and DURING FoT as Holy Days than that we treat them as feast days.

In our practical observances Holy Day instructions always take precedence over feast day instructions for the simple reason that God imposed specific restrictions on all Holy Days (i.e. a holy convocation and no work), which restrictions do not apply to non-Holy Day feast days. Do you follow?

Work and entertainment that are acceptable for (non-Sabbath) days 2-6 of UB and days 2-7 of FoT are simply not acceptable for the Holy Days and the Sabbath days during those two 7-day feasts. There is no such thing as "a **solemn** feast day" (words we used to sing in one of our psalms)! If anything, the

expression "a **solemn** feast day" is an oxymoron! If it is speaking about a Holy Day, then it could be "a solemn Holy Day" or "a solemn High Day", but never "a solemn feast day". **None of God's "feasts" are intended for "solemnity"!**

[**Comment:** In our old Hymnal #62 was "PRAISE THE ETERNAL WITH A PSALM". The words are taken from Psalm 81. The problem is that **in Psalm 81:3 we have a mistranslation**. The first correction needed in this verse is that the expression "in the time appointed" should read "in the full moon". Next, the expression "on our solemn feast day" should omit the word "solemn" which was without justification taken over from the Latin Vulgate translation of this verse. Thus the corrected text should read: "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon and in the full moon on our feast day".

The Hebrew word "chag" is used here, and so this is a reference to the 1st Day of UB (a full moon day) and/or the 1st Day of FoT (also a full moon day), both of which are Holy Days and also feast days, and on both of which the trumpets were blown. So if we still want to sing this Psalm then we should change the words in the first verse to read "**... ON OUR HOLY FEAST DAY**". The words "on our holy feast day" capture both, that this is speaking about a feast ("chag"), and that this is a Holy Day (thus "our HOLY feast day"). I believe that "on our holy feast day" is a better option for words to sing in this particular psalm.]

A careful reading of chapter 23 in Leviticus also shows that the Holy Day instructions for a day are more important than that day's very general feast day instructions.

Please note:

By saying that the Holy Day instructions always take precedence over feast day instructions I emphatically do not wish to imply that the feasts are somehow less important than the Holy Days! They are not! Without question the three feasts are extremely important, showing the three steps by which God builds His Family. What I wish to convey with this statement is that, **as far as the things that God expects us to do are concerned**, God's instructions for Holy Days take precedence over any activities that may be fully acceptable for non-Holy-Day feast days.

It is never a question of: are the feasts more important or are the Holy Days more important? That is never the question. There is no competition for importance between feasts and Holy Days. God's instructions for feasts are very general (God wants us to assemble and **enjoy** His feasts, while also learning to fear God), while God's instructions for Holy Days are more specific. And on a feast day that is also a Holy Day **the instructions** for the Holy Day **take precedence** over the more general instructions for a feast. And in practical terms that is how we have always understood and practiced this ... always observing the Holy Days during the feasts as Holy Days are commanded to be observed ... as holy convocations, and "not doing our regular work".

Now these three feasts were observed by getting together at "feast sites" (originally wherever God's Tabernacle was pitched, then just Jerusalem, today numerous feast sites). These three feasts are also associated with appearing before God with offerings. Three annual feasts and three annual offerings. The Holy Days are NOT intended for bringing offerings to God; offerings are linked to the three annual feasts.

So we now have **three distinct categories** of religious days. Technically all of them are "mow'ed" days because all of them are "appointed times". But one category is neither a feast nor a Holy Day (i.e. Passover), one category is composed of all the Holy Days (i.e. weekly Sabbath plus 7 annual Holy Days), and the third category is composed of the three annual feasts. However, for this third category the word "mow'ed" is never again inferred after Leviticus 23:44; thereafter this third category is identified exclusively by the word "chag". After Leviticus 23 when the word "mow'ed" is used in a religious context,

it invariably refers to the Holy Days, the second category above.

The Holy Days may differ amongst themselves with additional requirements, on top of the two requirements that identify them as Holy Days (i.e. these differences between the various Holy Days are: no added requirements for the weekly Sabbaths, no leaven to be eaten on all the days during UB, a special offering for Pentecost, fasting for Atonement, etc.). But they all share the common requirements of a holy convocation and no work, and it is these specific requirements that identify them as Holy Days.

A point to also keep in mind is this: Once Leviticus 23 has clearly defined the three distinct categories of religious observances, then thereafter they can simply be cited without again being described in detail.

Now let's consider the Passover.

WHERE DOES THE PASSOVER FIT IN?

The Passover is certainly "a mow'ed day". But it is NOT a Holy Day! It is neither described by the expression a holy convocation, nor is there any instruction for the Passover regarding no work is to be done. The biblical examples in both, Old Testament and New Testament, also do not identify the Passover day as a Holy Day. This is clear from what the apostles thought about this day; they looked upon it as a regular work-day.

Notice John 13:28-29.

Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. **For some *of them* thought**, because Judas had the bag, that **Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast**; or, that he should give something to the poor. (John 13:28-29)

Most of the disciples at Christ's last Passover did not hear what Jesus Christ had said to Judas before Judas left the room. So some of them **thought** that Christ had said: Judas, go out and **buy** us some supplies. Now we know that this is not what Christ had said. However, the very fact that the disciples **thought** Christ would send Judas out to do some shopping **AFTER Judas had eaten the Old Testament Passover**, shows that they certainly did not view the hours following the eating of the Passover as "holy time"! Do you follow?

This was their last Passover observance with Jesus Christ, and they certainly knew what activities Jesus Christ would or would not approve of on a Holy Day. If they thought, irrespective of whether this was in fact the case or not, that Jesus Christ would actually send one of them out to do some shopping, then they also assuredly understood that Jesus Christ did **not** view the hours following the Passover as holy time. Amos 8:5 (where people couldn't wait for the Sabbath to finish before wanting to sell their wheat at inflated prices) makes clear that buying and selling is not an activity for a Holy Day.

So John 13:29 shows quite clearly that Jesus Christ did not view the hours following the observance of the Passover as holy time. John 13:29 shows that Jesus Christ did **not** consider the 14th day to be a Holy Day!

Two more significant points:

Firstly, this verse also shows beyond doubt that Jesus Christ kept the Passover **at the beginning of the 14th day!** Had Jesus Christ's observance of the Passover been at the end of the 14th day (i.e. just before sunset), then by the time Judas went out it would have been the 15th day, which is irrefutably a

Holy Day (Leviticus 23:7) on which shopping for supplies was simply not permissible, and when at any rate nobody in Jerusalem would have been willing to sell you anything. So it could not have been the beginning of the 15th day when Judas went out. Therefore the only possibility is that Jesus Christ observed the Passover at the beginning of the 14th day.

Secondly, the expression "**against the feast**" in "buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast" is a translation of the Greek expression "eis ten heorten". Now the Greek preposition "eis", which always governs the accusative case, denotes **"motion to or unto an object**". So the Holy Day itself had not yet been reached; it was still ahead. That is what this use of the preposition "eis" tells us. This shows that the disciples themselves were very clear that **the Holy Day still lay ahead**, that the Holy Day, therefore, was the 15th, where they were at that point in time observing the Passover at the beginning of the 14th day.

[COMMENT: While the Greek word "heorte" in this expression "eis ten heorten" is here translated as "feast", it could mean either "feast" or "Holy Day". However, the statement regarding buying supplies seems to imply the specific needs for the Holy Day (when shopping would not be possible) rather than shopping ahead for all 7 days of the upcoming feast. So the expression "against the feast" is here better translated as "**against the Holy Day**".]

A number of other factors prove the same point, that Christ observed the Passover at the start of the 14th day, and that the Feast of Unleavened Bread starts on the 15th.

But as far as the Passover is concerned, it is neither a Holy Day nor is it a feast day. So where does the Passover fit into the picture?

THE PASSOVER IS NOT SOMETHING ALL PEOPLE SHOULD OBSERVE!

A Holy Day is sanctified because God has set that day apart for a very special purpose. God has put His presence into the annual Holy Days in the same way that God has put His presence into the weekly Sabbath days. The Sabbath was made for man to keep and to benefit from (Mark 2:27). And all human beings really ought to keep the Sabbath. Likewise, all human beings really ought to also keep all of the annual Holy Days because they reveal steps in God’s master-plan of salvation for all mankind.

The same is true for the three annual feasts: all human beings really ought to keep these feasts because they also reveal different aspects of God’s plan for human beings. Ignorance of these things, while it entails a lesser degree of responsibility, does not carry "full immunity" from any guilt. Rather, ignorance may qualify for God being willing to "wink at" the guilt that is involved (see Acts 17:30), provided that people are willing to repent (same verse).

There are no specific criteria that any person must first meet before that person is permitted to keep the weekly Sabbaths and the annual Feasts and Holy Days. All of these feasts and Holy Days should be observed by all people.

But the Passover is different!

The Passover has not been set apart by God putting His presence into that day; that day has not been "sanctified" by God, and therefore it is NOT a "Holy Day". Rather, it was a day of destruction, and God sent "the destroyer" through the land on the Passover day (see Exodus 12:23). It is the day on which Jesus Christ later died.

To make this plain:

Anybody who chooses to treat the Passover day (i.e. the 14th day) as a Holy Day is really attempting to confer a "holy status" onto **a day that God has not "sanctified"**! The day when Jesus Christ died is a somber day, yes! But it is **not** a day that God has "sanctified". **Why** would God the Father possibly want to "sanctify" the day on which the second member of the God Family willingly died? Why? **Why would God "sanctify" the day on which the death angel went through Egypt?**

And for those people who use the term "**the feast** of the Passover" I will say this:

It is totally incompatible to think that God the Father would EVER (!) consider declaring the day of the death of His Son Jesus Christ as "A FEAST DAY"! You have to totally PERVERT the meaning of the word "FEAST" to think that God would actually think of that day as "a feast"!

There is no such thing as "**the feast** of the Passover"! And no New Testament author ever used the expression "the feast of the Passover"! I will show this later! Can you understand the magnitude of the perversion in the Jewish custom to refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread as "**the Feast of the Passover**"? Try to see this from God's point of view.

It is one thing to have wars on some of the days that God has sanctified, provided that God's enemies are the ones that are defeated and destroyed or bound. Days that picture the defeat and destruction of God's enemies are days of **joy** ... all of God's enemies **deserve** to be defeated and destroyed. And whenever God "sanctifies" a day, that sanctification represents **joy**! But it is another thing altogether to think that God would somehow sanctify the day of the **death** of His (at that point in time) only Son.

Now the **proof** that God has not sanctified the 14th day is also quite clear. The 14th day happens to be the only day when God the Father ever turned His back on Jesus Christ, albeit for only a very short period of time. You know what Jesus Christ said before He died. He said: "**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME**" (Matthew 27:46).

Can you understand that the only day on which God the Father ever "forsook" Jesus Christ **cannot possibly be "sanctified time**"? That should be self-evident!

A day that is sanctified has God's presence in it. So **if** God on that day walks away or turns His back, **then that day cannot be sanctified**. Sanctified implies that God is present, that God stays and is available, and that all those who obey God have ready access to God. So when God the Father forsook Jesus Christ, who had never at any stage sinned, then that day cannot possibly be sanctified. So **the 14th day cannot be a Holy Day, and it even more so cannot possibly be a feast day**!

Now as far as the ordinance of the Passover is concerned, there is "one law to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourns among you" (Exodus 12:49). The Passover was only to be observed by **a limited number of people** who had met specific criteria. It was limited to Israelites (and all the males were required to be circumcised) plus those strangers that had become circumcised as well (i.e. for all the males amongst strangers).

In the Old Testament God used circumcision to represent repentance. And in the New Testament we have the "circumcision of the heart" (Romans 2:29). So **today** the Passover is not to be observed by all people either!

Today it is only repentant baptized adults (i.e. the Israel of God, Galatians 6:16) who should observe the Passover. And God does not want unrepentant people to participate in the Passover. So **there are vast numbers of people on earth at this time who should never** (in this age) **observe the Passover**. At

this time it is simply not for them.

The Passover is only for the select group of mature adults who have made an unconditional commitment to Almighty God, to totally submit their lives to God's rule. And observing the Passover is simply an annual outward reaffirmation of that unconditional commitment to God. That doesn't require a Holy Day!

So before any adult can be eligible to keep the Passover, that adult must first come to a real repentance towards God, by rejecting Satan's way of thinking and accepting into one's mind God's way of thinking, which includes an acknowledgment of our guilt before God. It is only after meeting God's conditions that a person becomes eligible to keep the Passover ... **and then** for that person the Passover becomes a commanded observance.

But **the Passover can be neither a feast nor a Holy Day**, because that would imply that all those who don't keep the Passover would be defiling and profaning that feast or Holy Day. That's the case with the people who don't keep the weekly Sabbaths (Exodus 31:14; Ezekiel 23:38; etc.). But God specifically instructs the uncircumcised (for us today read "spiritually uncircumcised") to **not** keep the Passover. Therefore the people who according to God's instructions don't keep the Passover cannot at the same time be profaning the Passover. God does not want them to keep the Passover in their present state!

So can we understand **why** the Passover cannot possibly be either a feast or a Holy Day? Today the Passover is an observance that God has restricted to a small group of people that God the Father Himself has specifically selected (see John 6:44,65). **Others should not keep it!** And the Passover is not a spectator sport ... unbaptized people should not be present when the Passover is observed.

But there is no feast or Holy Day which is somehow restricted to a small select group of people. **Feasts and Holy Days should really be observed by all**, and non-observance amounts to defiling those feasts and Holy Days. That's why in the millennium feast observance will be obligatory for all, irrespective of whether or not the people are repentant. Jesus Christ will simply not permit anyone to defile any of the feasts or Holy Days. See Zechariah 14:16-19 as an illustration of this point.

The point is this:

It is important for us to understand WHY the Passover cannot possibly be either a feast or a Holy Day!

This understanding is totally independent of how we understand the three New Testament verses we referred to earlier. It is how God speaks about the Passover in Leviticus 23, and the restrictions for Passover observance that God has spelled out in Exodus 12, which make this point clear, as does also the fact regarding God the Father forsaking Jesus Christ shortly before He died on the stake.

To get back to our discussion of the two Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed": up to the time of Ezra the distinctions between these two words were generally correctly understood by people who spoke Hebrew, and the meanings of "chag" and "mow'ed" were not confused.

Specifically, it was understood that in order to be a reference to a Holy Day the "mow'ed" had to be qualified by being called "a holy convocation", and it had to include the instruction to "do no work in it". It was understood that there is a weekly "mow'ed" day (the Sabbath), and that there are another 7 annual "mow'ed" days that are to be observed as Holy Days; and that in addition to these days there is one "mow'ed" OCCASION (the Passover) that is a commanded observance for all those people who meet God's requirements (circumcision in Old Testament times and baptism in New Testament times), but without actually being a Holy Day.

These special instructions for Holy Days do not apply to "chag" occasions!

Thus:

On days 2-6 of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and on days 2-7 of the Feast of Tabernacles it is quite acceptable to do those things we do on other ordinary weekdays (i.e. on non-Sabbath days). And so people typically go to work during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and we engage in various forms of entertainment during the Feast of Tabernacles (i.e. on the non-Holy Days). (The weekly Sabbath days obviously also come into this picture, which days we observe during these feasts as we do for the rest of the year.)

So now let's come to the New Testament.

THE LIMITATIONS OF BIBLICAL GREEK

While in Hebrew you could distinguish between different "mow'ed occasions", by either adding two specific requirements (i.e. for Holy Days), or by using the word "chag" (i.e. for feasts), **in the Greek language you simply could not make this distinction**! In the Greek language and culture there was no provision for dividing religious observances into two, let alone three, different categories. If they were religious days of any nature, then **the only word** you could use to identify them was the word "**heorte**". You simply had no other choice.

This was an enormous limitation on the writers of the New Testament.

If in New Testament Greek you wanted to talk about the Hebrew word "mow'ed" that was further qualified by the word "chag", then you had to use the Greek word "heorte".

And if you wanted to talk about the Hebrew word "mow'ed" with the added qualifications of "a holy convocation" and "no work", then you also had to use the Greek word "heorte".

And if you wanted to refer to **the religious observance** of the Passover on a specific day, i.e. a "mow'ed" without any added qualifications, then in Greek you also had to use the word "heorte". There were no other words or qualifying expressions at your disposal.

That was **an enormous weakness**!

In this present age the Church of God has for many years explained that God instituted "3 annual feasts and 7 annual Holy Days". But even with this explanation being freely available, many people in the churches of God are somewhat hazy on the distinction between "a feast" and "a Holy Day", as evidenced by people commonly, but incorrectly so, speaking about "the Feast of Trumpets". The Day of Trumpets is not a feast and it has never been a feast. Yet it is a deeply ingrained habit in many Church of God people to speak about "the **feast** of Trumpets". This is based on "mow'ed" being so commonly mistranslated into English as "feast".

So how much easier was it for people who spoke Greek to be confused in this regard, people who simply had no words to verbally distinguish between "a feast" and "a Holy Day" and "a Passover that was neither"? "Heorte" was the only word the writers of the books of the New Testament had to refer to all three of these different categories.

If it is a "chag" in Hebrew, then it is a "heorte" in Greek. If it is a "mow'ed" in Hebrew, then it is also a "heorte" in Greek. And if you are talking about the Passover in Hebrew, then you are also forced to use the word "heorte" in Greek. The writers of the New Testament saw no way around this limitation of

biblical Greek.

The reason for this limitation in Greek was simple. Before New Testament times it had never occurred to any native Greek-speaking individual that it might be a good idea to have completely different words to designate different kinds of religious observances. If it was a religious day, then in Greek you were speaking about a "heorte". Why on earth would the Greeks have wanted different words so that they could distinguish between "religious feasts" and "Holy Days"? They didn't understand this distinction, and you can't have words for distinctions you don't know exist. The pagan religions of old all had "religious feasts", but none of them had the concept of "Holy Days" that were specifically intended for teaching and instruction.

So that brings us to a problem.

When someone attempts to translate the New Testament Greek text (with only the one word "heorte" for the two Hebrew words "chag" and "mow'ed") into English, what does he do when he sees the word "heorte"? Does he translate it into English as "feast" or does he translate it into English as "Holy Day"? Or should it be translated as neither, because it is only a reference to the Passover, which is a "mow'ed" in Hebrew but without being a Holy Day (and most certainly not a feast!)?

Can you see the problem?

Unless the translator himself had a very clear understanding regarding which occurrences of "heorte" referred to the Hebrew "chag", and which occurrences of "heorte" referred to "mow'ed", it was inevitable that some wrong translations would occur. The problem here is not that they have incorrectly translated the Greek word "heorte"; the problem is that they lack discernment regarding whether a feast or a Holy Day is really meant, because the Greek language does not differentiate in this regard.

If you can understand this limitation inherent in biblical Greek, then you should be able to understand **correctly** all of the following 8 New Testament verses that could be seen to refer to the Passover as a "feast":

1) 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."

COMMENTS: Here the words "the feast of" are in italics, because there is no word for "feast" in the Greek text. So this verse does not state that the Passover is a feast.

2) 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**?"

COMMENTS: Here the words "the feast of" are also in italics, because there is again no word for "feast" in the Greek text. So this verse also does not state that the Passover is a feast. And anyway, this verse does not call the Passover a feast.

3) 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."

COMMENTS: Here the words "the feast of" are also in italics, because there is again no word for "feast" in the Greek text. So this verse also does not state that the Passover is a feast.

4) LUKE 2:41

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at **the feast of the passover**."

COMMENTS: Here Luke speaks about the "heorte" of the Passover. This should be seen in conjunction with Luke's statement in Luke 22:1, where Luke clearly explained that the Jews commonly referred to "the feast of unleavened bread" as "the feast of the Passover". So here in Luke 2:41 Luke is simply using the popular colloquial term "the feast of the Passover" to refer to the whole 8-day period, consisting of the Passover plus the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. This colloquial reference does not in any way confer "feast status" to the Passover. And furthermore, when we understand the three categories of "mow'ed" days that are presented in Leviticus 23, then the Passover could certainly have been described as a "mow'ed" occasion without any extra qualifications, and "heorte" was the only Greek word available to translate "mow'ed" into Greek.

But we need to also look at Luke 22:1 to see quite clearly where Luke is coming from in making this statement here in Luke 2:41.

5) LUKE 22:1

"Now **the feast of unleavened bread** drew nigh, which is **called the Passover**."

COMMENTS: Here Luke shows that he clearly understood that the Pharisees had changed the name of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to "the feast of the Passover". This verse explains Luke's statement in Luke 2:41. And as also explained above, there is an enormous perversion inherent in referring to the Passover as a feast!

6) 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."

COMMENTS: We likewise need to consider all three verses written by John (i.e. John 2:23; 6:4; 13:1) together, because John is also speaking in colloquial terms. In John 6:4 he stated very clearly that the Jews considered the Passover to be their "feast".

Here in John 2:23 he did not use the word "**day**". John was NOT speaking about "a feast **day**" at all!

What John wrote reads "when He was at the Passover, in the 'heorte' ...". The context is one where Jesus Christ is teaching and performing miracles. So this verse is not speaking about the 14th day at all; the Passover simply marked the start of the period for which Jesus Christ had come to Jerusalem. But the second part of this verse is speaking about something that took place on one or more of the 7 days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which are here identified by the Greek word "heorte".

To paraphrase John's words here: "Now when He was come to Jerusalem for the Passover (and the Feast of Unleavened Bread), in the feast ("heorte", i.e. during those 7 days), many believed in His name, when **they saw the miracles** which Christ performed during that Feast of Unleavened Bread (not on the Passover day)." John wasn't speaking about the actual Passover at all; he was simply speaking about

the whole period of time the Jews called "the Passover". See the comments for John 6:4.

7) JOHN 6:4

"And the **passover, a feast of the Jews**, was nigh."

COMMENTS: This wording is very interesting, because John himself was very much "a Jew"! Had the Apostle John considered the Passover to be one of God's feasts, then he would certainly not have called it "a feast of the Jews". At the same time John was certainly always going to be extremely respectful for the real "Passover". Can you understand that?

Now this wording reveals that **John was distancing himself somewhat from what the Jews called "the Passover"**. Can you see that? Rather than identifying with what the Jews called "the Passover", John was actually distancing himself from their customs and practices. That is what this wording shows us!

John **knew** that it was wrong for the Jews to call the Feast of Unleavened Bread "the feast of the Passover", but he also wanted to write in terms that the majority of his readers were likely to understand (like me perhaps using the word "Christmas" in a certain context). So he used the word "Passover" with the meaning that was generally understood in Jewish circles at his time, but with the qualification that this was what "the Jews" called the feast, and John meant the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

So again, this verse certainly does not establish the Passover as one of the feasts of God. Further, the same comments for the Greek word "heorte" also apply to this verse. "Heorte" could mean "feast" or "Holy Day" or "the mow'ed of Passover".

8) 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."

COMMENTS: Here I suspect that with the expression "the 'heorte' of Passover" John really wanted to refer to "the mow'ed of Passover". This was "before" the Passover. And "heorte" was the only word available to John to express the concept of "the mow'ed of Passover". Here John was NOT thinking of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; no, here John was very much focused on "the appointed time (mow'ed) of Passover", because here John was starting the account that would culminate in the death of Jesus Christ.

So here we have an example of a "technically correct" translation of the Greek text, but which in actual practice is a major mistranslation because the Greek language could not distinguish between the three different categories of "mow'eds" that are outlined in Leviticus 23. Can you see that?

This covers all the New Testament references that could imply that the Passover is a feast, which it is not!

The lesson for us today is this:

Because of the lack of distinction in the biblical Greek language for the distinct Hebrew concepts conveyed by the words "chag" and "mow'ed", therefore we need to be very cautious in drawing conclusions based on the use of the Greek word "heorte" in the text of the New Testament.

The only way we can know what the word "heorte" in a specific New Testament text is supposed to mean, is by being very clear about whether this is a reference to something that is in the Old Testament identified as a "chag", or whether it is in the Old Testament identified as a "mow'ed", or whether it is speaking about the Passover (as in John 13:1), which the Old Testament shows is neither a feast nor a Holy Day, though it is rightly described by the Hebrew word "mow'ed" (but without the added qualifications that identify Holy Days).

This is a difficulty that needs to be kept in mind. But there is also another difficulty, and that is the Jewish traditions that were extant at the time of the New Testament.

JEWISH USE OF THE WORD "PASSOVER"

After the deaths of Ezra and the soferim at that time, the Jews in Palestine came under the cultural influence of the conquering Greeks. From around 142 B.C. to about 40 B.C. the development of Jewish religious traditions and understanding had been controlled by five pairs of non-levitical scholars, collectively known as the "zugot". During this time a vast number of pagan customs found acceptance in Judaism. This is discussed at some length in my article entitled "The Development of Jewish Laws Through the Ages".

The point is that by the time of the ministry of Jesus Christ a number of changes had been introduced into Jewish understanding and practices, departing from the instructions God had given through Moses.

The changes that are of importance in our context here are:

1) The non-levitical sect of the Pharisees had stopped observing the Passover immediately after sunset, at the start of the 14th day of the 1st month, though at that time the sect of the Sadducees (mostly from the tribe of Levi) were still observing the Passover at the start of the 14th day.

2) So the Pharisees started their "Passover activities" (i.e. the killing of the lambs) towards the end of the 14th day. But they did not actually eat their Passover until after the 15th day had started. So technically their Passover activities were spread across TWO different days (killing the lambs on one day, and eating them on the next day). That is already somewhat confusing, and certainly unbiblical.

3) Together with this change the Pharisees also dropped using the term "Feast of Unleavened Bread" in favor of calling the whole period "the Passover". So the word **Passover** which God had given to designate a specific activity at the start of the 14th day came to be used by the Jews to refer to **the whole 7-day period** of Unleavened Bread. So where the gospel writers still occasionally refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, other Jews were commonly just referring to the whole period as "the Passover".

The non-Jewish author Luke noted this trend for us in the Scripture we have already looked at.

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

4) The writers of the gospel accounts wanted to communicate clearly with their readers. The main concern is usually to make sure that your readers correctly understand what you are trying to tell them. Thus: if I were to say in my writings that I did something "the day after Christmas", that simply means that I wanted to make quite clear my readers (whom I would assume to be totally familiar with Christmas) would know the exact day I was referring to. It would not necessarily mean that I myself therefore have to be keeping Christmas. Effective communication requires a writer to use words and concepts with

which his readers are likely to be familiar.

Thus when Luke refers to "a Sabbath day's journey" (Acts 1:12), then that is simply a way of precisely pinpointing a specific distance. It is **not an endorsement** of the unbiblical pharisaical custom of wanting to restrict a person's movements on the Sabbath to a very short distance. It is simply effective communication for conveying the length of a specific distance to readers at that time.

The point here is that for the general Jewish population at the time of the New Testament the distinctions between "the Passover" and "the Feast of Unleavened Bread" had become somewhat blurred and vague.

Also keep the following in mind:

There was no confusion of any kind when God gave His instructions to Israel through Moses in Exodus 12 and in Leviticus 23. Israel had not yet introduced "new interpretations" for God's instructions, since those "instructions" were barely being given. Provided we are not dealing with mistranslations regarding God's instructions for the Passover and for the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread in Leviticus 23, there is no reason why we should not accept God's statements in Leviticus 23 regarding the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread at face value!

It is a fact that by the time of Christ's ministry the Jews had introduced into their religion a vast range of incorrect interpretations of the Scriptures. And they also readily used their man-made traditions to interpret the Old Testament incorrectly (Matthew 15:3, 6-9; Mark 7:9,13; etc.).

So a fundamental question is:

In the case of apparent differences between Old Testament instructions and New Testament observations, what are we to do? Should we interpret the Old Testament instructions in terms of the New Testament observations? Or should we interpret the New Testament observations in terms of the Old Testament instructions? What carries the greater authority: an Old Testament command or a New Testament observation regarding that Old Testament command?

Is there a priority in this process or is there not a priority in this process?

In view of Scriptures like Malachi 3:6 ("I am the Eternal, I change not") and Hebrews 13:8 ("Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever") and Matthew 5:17 ("think not that I am come to destroy the law") I am convinced that God expects us, where applicable, to understand New Testament observations in terms of the relevant Old Testament laws and instructions.

Clearly, **the law** that was originally given is always more important than any later mere references to that law. The dates for the Passover, the feasts and the Holy Days were not changed in the New Testament, and therefore the dates spelled out in Leviticus 23 must still be correct!

We need to be on guard against people who wish to use the New Testament to argue against laws that are clearly spelled out in the Old Testament. A law cannot be done away by a mere reference to that law at a later time; only another "Lawgiver" could do that (i.e. change laws) ... and He clearly stated that He would not do so (Matthew 5:17)!

So now let's look at the verses we mentioned at the start of this article.

MATTHEW 26:17 and MARK 14:12 and LUKE 22:7

To refresh our minds, here are these verses once again:

"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?" (Matthew 26:17)

"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?" (Mark 14:12)

"Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed." (Luke 22:7)

[We have already briefly examined Matthew 26:17. But as it covers the same event as the other two verses, we'll include it here again.]

First of all, we need to recognize that here we are not dealing with any "inspired words"! **All three verses are speaking about the identical event**; that is obvious. None of them present quotations from Jesus Christ. And so the slight differences in wording are nothing more than the personal choices of the words the three different authors here chose to describe this particular situation. These verses give us their personal perceptions; the text is nothing more than a subjective descriptive presentation of a specific situation. And there is nothing wrong with this being a subjective presentation of how each author perceived that situation. (For a more in-depth discussion regarding such "subjective" statements in the Bible see my 70-page article on the Book of Luke.)

But it was assuredly not "God's inspiration" that prompted Matthew to omit the word for "day" or that prompted Luke to omit the word for "first" or that prompted Matthew to omit mentioning that it was the day "when the Passover must be killed". These differences reflect the personal choices of the different authors, nothing more.

Since all three Scriptures here speak about the same event, therefore we should treat them accordingly. Whatever fact is true for any one of these three verses, is also applicable to the other two verses, because we are dealing with three descriptions of just one specific event.

So let's note the following things:

1) Luke makes clear that the Passover lambs had **not yet** been killed! This fact is therefore also true for Matthew's and Mark's statements here. The Passover lambs had not yet been killed by anyone.

2) The clear instruction in Exodus 12:6 was that the Passover lambs were to be killed between sunset and darkness (JPS renders this as "dusk", Hebrew literally reads "between the two evenings") at the start of the 14th day.

3) Since these 3 verses here all speak about something that took place **before** sunset, the only possibility is that all 3 verses are speaking about something that took place during the daylight hours of the 13th day, before the sunset that ushered in the 14th day.

4) While pharisaical Jewish customs changed this time for killing the Passover lambs to late afternoon on the 14th day, it is also clear that the Pharisees themselves only got ready to have their own Passovers **after** Jesus Christ had been crucified. This also means that Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 all identify this as happening during the daylight hours of the 13th, because it was another full day before the Pharisees killed their Passover animals.

5) Now both Matthew and Mark refer to this day (i.e. the day the disciples asked Jesus Christ about preparing for the Passover) as "the first day of unleavened bread". This was the 13th day. We should note that **none of these verses** refer to this specific day as "**the feast** of Unleavened Bread". In Matthew 26:17 the words "the feast of" are in italics, indicating that they are not found in the Greek text.

6) And indeed, the Greek word "heorte" (i.e. "feast" or "Holy Day") is not used in any of these three verses. This means that **none of these three authors** claimed that these events took place on or during "**the feast** of Unleavened Bread".

7) Let's consider Luke's testimony. In verse 1 Luke stated that "**the feast** of Unleavened Bread **drew near**". So Luke draws a clear distinction between "the Feast of Unleavened Bread" drawing near in verse 1, and "**the day** of unleavened bread" in verse 7. Now since Luke continued to point out that the Passover for Jesus Christ still needed to be prepared, and since Jesus Christ kept the Passover a day **before** the Pharisees ate their Passover, therefore Luke's reference to "**the day** of Unleavened Bread" could not possibly be a reference to any one of the Seven Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread by anybody's counting.

Nobody, not the Old Testament instructions and not the Pharisees and not the Sadducees, nobody at that time claimed that the 13th day of the month was the first day of "the feast of Unleavened Bread", because there was nobody who claimed that "the feast" could start on the 13th day.

Luke knew full well that nobody referred to the 13th day as a part of "the feast". And the 13th day was also not a part of "the Passover" for anybody. And so when Luke referred to "the day" of unleavened bread, then he did not mean "the Feast" of Unleavened Bread. We need to understand the distinction Luke made between verses 1 and 7.

8) So what did the three writers mean with their comments?

Consider your own way of speaking. You **know** that with God every day starts and ends with a sunset. Thus, Sunday really starts Saturday evening after sunset, and Wednesday really starts Tuesday evening after sunset. But is that a consideration in your own speaking?

When you want to tell me something about what has been planned for Tuesday evening at 8:00 o'clock, do you say: "let me tell you what we'll do on Tuesday", or do you say "let me tell you what we'll do on Wednesday", since 8:00 p.m. is technically already a part of Wednesday? What do **you** say? Why, you are not about to refer to an activity at 8:00 p.m. on a Tuesday as being on Wednesday, are you? Certainly not! You'll speak about that activity as being on Tuesday.

9) I believe the gospel writers reasoned the same way. While they understood that technically any activity after sunset was really "on the next day", in their ordinary speaking they would have referred to all activities before and after sunset, right up to going to sleep, as being on the same day. **That's what we do!** All of us have always considered the time between getting up in the morning and going to sleep late at night as "one day". That's how our minds function.

And people in New Testament times weren't any different from us in this regard. They also viewed a day as going up to the time they went to sleep. For example, if a servant worked all day in the fields and then still had to prepare food for his master (e.g. Luke 17:7-8), that work might well go past sunset; but that servant would undoubtedly have considered his kitchen-work as a part of the same day's work as his earlier work in the fields.

10) So here is the point:

Let’s say, for argument’s sake, that the events in Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 took place in the morning or early afternoon of a Tuesday. That Tuesday evening the apostles were going to eat the Passover with Jesus Christ, because at sunset that Tuesday evening the 14th day was going to start.

In their own thinking Matthew and Mark and Luke would have viewed the anticipated activities for Tuesday evening as taking place on the same day as that conversation late Tuesday morning. That’s the same way we today view our days and our activities. It is perfectly normal to view our days as including everything between waking up in the morning and going to sleep at night, even though technically this covers parts of two different days.

I believe that all three authors referred to "the first of unleavened bread" (Matthew) or "the first day of unleavened bread" (Mark) or "the day of unleavened bread" (Luke) because in their minds they included the activities planned for after sunset as a part of that same day. With these expressions all three authors had **the start of the 14th day in mind**!

11) Now it was not very common to eat unleavened bread at other times of the year. Eating unleavened bread carried a religious connotation, because it was associated with the exodus out of Egypt. And eating unleavened bread was specifically identified with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

12) In common everyday speaking the whole 8-day period (i.e. 14th to 21st days inclusive) was by many Jews referred to as "**the days** of unleavened bread", precisely because for most Jews the 14th day was the first day in a long while on which they ate some unleavened bread. But in this colloquial way of speaking they did not call this "the feast" of unleavened bread; it was simply the first "**day**" on which they ate some unleavened bread.

I believe that Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 are all written from this colloquial perspective of viewing the activity scheduled for after sunset that evening (i.e. eating unleavened bread with the Passover) as being a part of the same day on which this conversation took place (i.e. morning or early afternoon of the 13th day). And they wrote this from the then common Jewish perspective that the killing of the Passover ushered in 8 "**days**" of eating unleavened bread.

The focus is not on "how many days do our homes need to be deleavened?" or on "when does **the feast** of Unleavened Bread actually start?". No, the focus is simply on the matter that the 14th day started a period of 8 **days** when they would eat some unleavened bread, something they didn’t do the rest of the year. (And this does not mean or imply that therefore they were somehow not allowed to eat any remaining leavened bread on the morning after the Passover; it is Leviticus 23 that spells out God’s instructions in regard to not eating leaven.)

Put another way:

These three verses simply reveal **a certain perspective** from which these writers, as well as most Jews in general at that time, viewed the upcoming Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. But by no stretch of the imagination were any of those three writers attempting to state or to define **a law**! Theirs are nothing more than descriptive statements, aimed at helping their contemporary audience to correctly pinpoint the time they were speaking about.

So let’s summarize what we have covered.

IN CONCLUSION

1) All the religious observances in the year are covered in Leviticus 23. If some day or occasion is not mentioned in this chapter, then it is not a religious requirement for us.

2) All the religious observances in the year are "appointed times", and therefore the Hebrew word "mow'ed" is used to describe **all of them**. All the observances fall into three distinct categories of observances.

3) The **first category** consists of the Passover, which is a "mow'ed" (i.e. an appointed time) but **without** being either a Holy Day or a feast. This means that, except for the time devoted to the Passover, there is nothing special about the rest of the 14th day.

4) The **second category** consists of the weekly Sabbath days plus the 7 annual Holy Days. These "mow'eds" are all specifically identified as "holy convocations" and with the added instruction that "no work is to be done".

5) The **third category** consists of the 3 annual feasts. They are all identified by the Hebrew word "chag" being applied to them. While technically these three feasts are also "mow'eds", in practice after Leviticus 23 they are always identified by the word "chag". In its religious use the word "mow'ed" is used for the Holy Days, and "chag" is the Hebrew word for "feast".

6) As far as the Passover is concerned, John 13:29 makes clear that Jesus Christ did not view the rest of the 14th day, after the Passover ceremony had been concluded, to in any way be "sanctified" or "holy time". The apostles understood that this time was still freely available for activities like shopping, etc.

7) By God the Father for a short time forsaking Jesus Christ on the 14th day, it is very clear that **the 14th day cannot possibly be sanctified**. The concepts of forsaking and sanctifying are mutually exclusive.

8) The term "**the feast** of the Passover" is an utter perversion of the word feast. To think that God would designate the day on which His Son Jesus Christ was tortured to death as a feast is absurd!

9) In the situation where a Holy Day (be that the weekly Sabbath or be that one of the 7 annual Holy Days) is a part of one of the three annual feasts, it is the specific Holy Day instructions that always takes priority over the general feast attributes of that day. In other words, on such a day the added Holy Day instructions (i.e. a holy convocation and no work) take priority over any "feasting" considerations. This we have always basically understood and applied correctly.

10) The Passover can also not be either a Holy Day or a feast because many people are explicitly forbidden to take the Passover (i.e. all those who are "spiritually uncircumcised"). Only days that are universally applicable to all people can be either feasts or Holy Days. So on this count the Passover can also not be a Holy Day or a feast.

11) When examining New Testament Scriptures that speak about "feasts" or "holy days", we should always remember that New Testament Greek did not have any words to indicate a distinction between a religious feast and a Holy Day. The one Greek word "heorte" was used to translate the two Hebrew words "mow'ed" and "chag". So don't assume that the translators necessarily made the right choice when they translated the Greek word "heorte" as "feast". They certainly didn't make the right choice when they translated John 13:1.

12) A number of New Testament references to the Passover are in fact only the colloquial way that the Jews 2000 years ago had begun to refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is a serious mistake to

refer to the Passover as a feast!

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