

Do You Observe a *PAGAN* PASSOVER?

Was the Passover ever meant to be a "memorial" of the DEATH of Christ, as many churches claim which observe it on the evening beginning Nisan 14? Or is observing the DEATH of a Saviour hanging on a cross a PAGAN custom dating back to time immemorial -- to the pagan customs introduced by Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz? Here is new truth with a cutting edge that will cut through the "smoke and mirrors" of modern religious confusion! Here is powerful new truth that will explode like dynamite the false, neo-pagan customs observed by many who are deceived and never understood the profound significance of their practice!

William F. Dankenbring

On Thursday, Nisan 14, in 30 A.D., Jesus Christ of Nazareth was nailed to an upright stake or tree outside the bounds of ancient Jerusalem on an outcropping of the Mount of Olives, overlooking the eastern Temple entrance. As He was affixed to this "accursed tree" with its wooden cross-beam, Jesus endured all the agony, pain, and suffering that the human mind can imagine -- searing pain, numbing achiness, dizziness, cramps, traumatic fever, shame and obloquy, throbbing wounds and lacerated veins. Every movement was sheer agony. His arteries and veins became swollen with surcharged blood. From nine in the morning until three in the afternoon, He suffered, bled and finally died the most horrible form of death known to man -- crucifixion. He died, giving His life for your sins and mine and for the sins of every man, woman and child who has lived or ever will live.

Think about it. Re-enact this most heinous of all murders in the mental imagery of your mind. This was no doubt the moment, ironically, of Satan's greatest triumph -- he had succeeded in getting the "Son of God" killed, murdered, in a frenzy of hatred and loathing. The Saviour of the world was nailed to the cross. The Redeemer of mankind hung there, dead, having suffered the utmost agony and indescribable pain, shame, and ignominy.

The Lamb of God

The "Lamb of God" had been slain for the sins of the world! The apostle Paul wrote as a consequence of this event, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. . ." (I Cor.5:7). Just as the Jews sacrificed their Passover lambs every year on the afternoon of Nisan 14, so

Jesus Christ died for our sins at that very same time. Paul went on, "Therefore let us KEEP THE FESTIVAL, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor.5:7-8).

What is Paul saying here?

In ancient Israel, the "feast of the Passover" began with the slaying of the Passover lamb, which then was bled, skinned, and roasted whole. God told Israel to take care of the lambs until the 14th day of Nisan, "when all the people of the community must slaughter them at twilight [the ending of the 14th, before sunset]" (Ex.12:6). The original Hebrew for "twilight" was literally "between the two evenings," and meant generally the period of time between noon and sunset, or the time during which the sun was "going down" in the sky. Sunset marked the beginning of a new day, Nisan 15.

God went on, "That same night" -- or what would have been Nisan 15, therefore -- "they are to EAT the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. . . . Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover" (v.8-11). "On that SAME NIGHT" -- Nisan 15 -- "I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn -- both men and animals -- and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a SIGN for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will PASS OVER you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt" (Ex.12:12-13).

God goes on, "This is a day you are to COMMEMORATE [the day of Nisan 15, when the Passover was eaten, and the children of Israel were "passed over" and spared the destruction that came upon the Egyptians!]; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it AS A FESTIVAL to the LORD -- a lasting [or everlasting] ordinance" (Ex.12:14). "For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast" (v.15).

This awesome day of celebration was Nisan 15, the first Holy Day of the Feast called Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread. It celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the sparing of Israel and the slaughter God wreaked upon their enemies, the paganized Egyptians. It was a celebration of immense joy and incredible, miraculous Triumph. It proclaimed freedom, liberty, rescue from slavery and bondage, and deliverance!

Later, God told the Israelites, "On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' This observance will be for you like a SIGN on your hand and a REMINDER on your forehead that the LAW of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year" (Ex.13:8-10).

The Passover -- a Joyous Celebration!

This great festival of the Passover, eaten on Nisan 15, with great joy and anticipation, was to be "a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand"(Ex.13:16). Notice that this actual celebration occurred on Nisan 15, and symbolized the DELIVERANCE which God wrought! It was a positive,

uplifting, emotional celebration of tremendous excitement and joy. There was nothing negative about it. The children of Israel did NOT celebrate the slaughtering of the lambs, or their being killed, in Nisan 14, in any manner, shape or form. But they DID celebrate their own being SPARED and "passed over" at midnight from the slaying hand of the LORD who struck down all those houses where there was no "blood" of the lamb on their doorposts or lintels.

"At midnight the LORD" -- notice, this was God Himself who executed this judgment, not, as many believe, merely a "death angel" or "angel of the Lord" at all -- "At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead" (Ex.12:29-30).

The whole celebration and memorial of the Passover revolved around the EATING of the lamb, and being Passed Over and delivered from Egypt, a type of SIN. The Jews were never commanded, and never observed, any "memorial" of the DEATH or slaughtering of the lamb itself. They never celebrated the "death" of the lamb -- which was a type of Jesus Christ, the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Rather, they celebrated the VICTORY God gave them over their enemies, the Egyptians, a type of SIN, from whom they were SET FREE by the blood of the Lamb, and the EATING of the Lamb!

The shed blood of the Passover lambs actually symbolized the shed blood of Jesus the Messiah who gave His life for our sins; the eating of the lambs symbolized the EATING of the Messiah, or His body given for our sins, and accepting of His sacrifice -- as well as the "eating" of His "flesh," which meant the devouring of His Words and acceptance of His message! As Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. . . . I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. I This bread is MY FLESH, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:35, 51). Jesus said, "So the one who feeds on me will live because of me (v.57). He did not mean His literal flesh of course; He was speaking spiritually. He explained, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The WORDS I have spoken to you are SPIRIT and they are LIFE" (v.63).

In other words, the PASSOVER CELEBRATION, which is to be observed and always has been observed, on Nisan 15, the very NIGHT God freed His people from Egyptian bondage and slavery, and DELIVERED them from the power of Egypt ("sin"), is the very same celebration CHRISTIANS are to observe, in the very same manner, in celebration of CHRIST delivering US from bondage to SIN, and bringing us SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE!

It is a time of reviewing the whole plan of God, from start to finish, and ends up with our LOOKING FORWARD to the return of Christ our Deliverer to bring the Kingdom of God, and to finish His task of complete DELIVERANCE from this evil world of Satan's dominion (Rev.12:9; II Cor.4:4; Eph.2:2).

The True Passover

The true Passover -- celebrated always on Nisan 15 -- points directly and completely to JESUS CHRIST, coming as our Saviour and Redeemer and KING of kings and LORD of lords, bringing us COMPLETE DELIVERANCE and ETERNAL SALVATION! It is a time of awesome joy and fulfillment. It points NOT to just a "dead Christ," hanging on a cross, suffering obloquy and shame -- it points to the LIVING CHRIST, WHO SAVES US from sin and the power and clutches of sin and the corruption of the flesh! The entire focus of this Holy Day of God is POSITIVE -- *not negative!*

However, Satan the devil is the great perverter of all truth. And Satan has also perverted and polluted this awesome truth of the Passover, and turned it into a time of negativism, somberness, sorrow, grief, shame, reproach, self-loathing, contempt, and mourning.

Notice how subtly he has done this. The whole emphasis of the Passover is, according to the Scriptures, the EATING of a Feast, especially the lamb, and the commemoration of DELIVERANCE and FREEDOM. Nowhere in the Scriptures will you ever find any commemoration or memorializing of DEAD people, things or artifacts. This is a PAGAN custom! Pagans memorialize birthdays (ie, "Christmas" which is the "mass of Christ," and dates back to the PAGAN custom of observing the winter solstice and the "birth" of the new "sun god" -- observed by the Romans as the "Saturnalia"), death days (ie., "Good Friday," the day the Catholics claim Jesus died -- why they would call that "good" is a subtle indication of the devil's trickery, confusing people into celebrating a day God NEVER commanded to be celebrated!).

The Passover celebration was not and was never intended to be a "memorial" of the DEATH of Christ (any more than the Israelites ever "memorialized" the death of the Passover lambs slaughtered on Nisan 14!). Notice! The apostle Paul explained: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed [two evenings PRIOR to the Passover!], took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you EAT this bread and drink this cup, YOU PROCLAIM the Lord's death UNTIL HE COMES" (I Cor.11:23-26).

The Meaning of the Kiddush

Notice! This event, called a *Kiddush* or "Blessing" in Hebrew, refers to the bread and wine Jesus told His disciples to take "in remembrance" of His broken body and shed blood. This final ceremony Jesus held with His disciples before He died on the stake as our Passover Lamb was not itself the *Passover*. It was a special "bread and wine" ceremony to be partaken of throughout the year, when brethren get together.

However, this ceremony should not be confused with the Passover itself!

Of course, as we eat the Passover bread, during the Passover meal on Nisan 15, the

broken bread REMINDS us of the body of Christ, our Passover Lamb, beaten, pierced and slain for us; and the wine REMINDS us of his shed blood, given for our sins. This should be literally true, every Passover, every year -- for the EATING of the bread and DRINKING of the wine occurs on Nisan 15, just AFTER the afternoon of Nisan 14, when the Passover was actually SLAIN! The time sequence is perfect; just as we should expect.

We do not celebrate, however, the DEATH of Christ -- that was indeed the most horrible thing that ever had to happen, an appalling and totally unjust thing. He literally became SIN FOR US -- a SIN OFFERING. And as such, God the Father actually had to turn His back on His beloved Son, and let Him die an agonizing death on the stake or tree. We don't rejoice in the DEATH of Christ, but rather in what that death ACCOMPLISHES FOR US -- the DELIVERANCE FROM SIN that He made possible, and makes possible since He now sits at God's right hand, to evermore intercede for us (Heb.7:24-27).

The Passover therefore is a MEMORIAL OF DELIVERANCE from sin -- not of the horrible death that Christ suffered. We celebrate DELIVERANCE, just as the ancient Israelites did, and every Jew does today, when they partake of the Passover.

However, the Passover, like the *Kiddush*, also is an occasion where we "PROCLAIM the Lord's death TILL HE COMES" (I Cor.11:26). This is the part of the Passover that those who attempt to observe it on Nisan 14, prior to the true Passover, fail to perceive and observe at all. The word "proclaim" in the Greek is *katagello* and means, literally, "declare, promulgate, preach, speak of, teach." This is not a word that connotes "memorialize" at all, but rather "PROCLAIM, PREACH, TEACH" the truth about the significance of Christ's death and how it delivers us from SIN and the power of Satan -- which is the WHOLE SPIRITUAL MEANING of the Passover celebration on Nisan 15!

That very evening we are to TEACH our family, and children the real meaning of our DELIVERANCE from Satan's control, and sin, through Christ, as we rehearse and teach the whole lesson of the Passover in ancient Egypt, at its foundation, and the plagues upon Egypt, following up with the lesson of Christ our Passover, and continuing the saga through the SECOND COMING of Christ, when He will complete the DELIVERANCE He has made possible and brought to mankind!

Therefore, Paul said, we "proclaim the Lord's death *until he comes*" (II Cor.11:26) -- that is, the story of Christ's death, resurrection, what it means to us, His ascension into heaven, and the final judgment He will bring on the world in the Great Tribulation, the "Day of the Lord," and the prophecies leading up to HIS SECOND COMING!

Christ died for us in the afternoon of Nisan 14, in 30 A.D. And that very evening, Nisan 15, is the annual celebration of the PASSOVER SEDER, or dinner and story-telling, explaining how just as God passed over the firstborn of Israel in ancient Egypt, protecting them from death, so God "passes over" our sins when He sees the "blood of Christ" covering them, and forgives us, and blots out our transgressions of His Law -- enabling us to receive FINAL SALVATION when Christ returns to execute judgment on the wicked, to deliver the righteous, and to usher in everlasting righteousness and the Kingdom of God!

Daniel's Amazing Prophecy

As Daniel wrote, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy" (Dan.9:24). This prophecy of the Messiah or Saviour deals with TWO ADVENTS -- the time He came to pay the penalty for our sins and the time He comes again to usher in the Kingdom of God and everlasting righteousness! Daniel was told that from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem -- issued later by Persian king Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. -- till the coming of Messiah would be seven "sevens" and sixty-two "sevens" -- or 69 "sevens" or "weeks." A day being a year in fulfillment (Num.14:34; Ezek.4:4-6), 69 weeks of 7 days each was 483 days or *years* in actual fulfillment. From 457 B.C. till the coming of the Messiah would be 483 years. Thus Christ actually began His ministry in 27 A.D. -- exactly 483 years after the decree!

The "final week" or "seven" years of this prophecy REMAIN TO BE FULFILLED! They will involve the final suffering on this world, its judgments, the abomination of desolation, the destruction of Jerusalem, the Great Tribulation, and the punishments of God during the "Day of the Lord" (Dan.9:26-27). This final "week" will usher in the SECOND COMING of Messiah, when "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever. . . . The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great -- and for destroying those who destroy the earth" (Rev.11:15-18).

True Christians, who partake of the Passover, have their eyes on the future -- the future when this present world under the cloud of illusion and deceptive sway of Satan the devil (Rev.12:9) will be abolished and replaced by the joyous, exuberant, scintillating, dazzling Kingdom of God! We look forward, in the Passover, to the time when Christ will replace all the pagan traditions, customs, and ideas of this world, with its false Christmas, fraudulent "Easter," phony "Good Friday," and fake "Nisan 14 Passover" which God never commanded and Christ never sanctioned -- all which have their roots buried in PAGANISM -- with the TRUTH of God, and the true Holy Days of GOD!

Beware of Pagan Traditions

The eyes of true Christians, when they celebrate Passover, are not on a dead "Saviour" hanging on a cross, which is a carry-over of the PAGAN tradition of a dead "Tammuz" who was crucified, or a dead Nimrod, or a dead "Saturn," the pagan "saviour" of the world -- the apostate saviour of the Babylonian Mystery religion. God says He will not even listen to the prayers of people -- even "Christians" -- who insist on learning, believing and practicing HEATHEN, pagan concepts and ways.

"Thus saith the LORD, 'Learn not the way of the heathen . . . For the customs of the people are VAIN" (Jer.10:2-3). The Jewish Tanakh has, "Do not learn to go the way of the nations . . . For the laws of the nations are DELUSIONS." The Moffat translation has, "Never

learn to live like PAGANS . . . but their rites are inane." The Amplified Bible says: "Learn not the way of the heathen (nations) . . . For the customs and ordinances of the peoples are FALSE, EMPTY and FUTILE."

The particular custom of the pagans, in the spring of every year, was to weep and lament the slaying and death of Tammuz, the pagan false saviour. In Ezekiel 8:14, the prophet says, "Then he brought me to the entrance to the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, MOURNING FOR TAMMUZ." The KJV says they were "weeping for Tammuz." God called this custom "greater abominations," or "things that are even more detestable" (verse 13).

In the Tanakh we read, "And He said to me, 'You shall see even more terrible abominations which they practice.' Next He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the House of the LORD; and there sat the women BEWAILING TAMMUZ."

Tammuz-Osiris-Adonis-Saturn-NIMROD!

Who was this Tammuz? *The New Bible Dictionary* says, "This mourning for the god Tammuz took place on the second day of the fourth month (June-July), which was named after this event. It commemorated the legendary DEATH of the Sumerian deity Dumu-zi ('true son'), the prediluvian shepherd and husband of Ishtar [Easter]. On his death, Ishtar mourned and called on all to do so . . . [The cult] seems to have become popular, however, in Syria and Phoenicia, where a similar legend is told of Adonis and Aphrodite. A reference to the planting of gardens to these deities is possibly given in Isaiah 17:10. The temple of Aphrodite in Gebal, Syria, was a principal centre of this cult, also known in Egypt, where Adonis was identified with Osiris" ("Tammuz," p.1238).

Tammuz was "originally the sun-god, primarily a god of Babylonia, slain by a wild boar while hunting, and mourned long and vainly by the goddess Ishtar. He is generally identified with Adonis, of Greek mythology, whose story is practically the same. According to Sayce, the Canaanites called him 'Adonai' lord, from which when the myth reached Greece came the name Adonis" (*Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, p.667).

"Tammuz was an ancient Akkadian deity whose worship spread throughout the Semitic world. He was the husband and brother of Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of procreation. . . . The Greek counterpart of Tammuz was Adonis and the Egyptian, Osiris. Tammuz cults are thought to be referred to in Jer.22:19; Amos 8:10; Zech.12:10 . . . Tammuz worship was connected with licentious festivals. In Babylon the cult included the annual marriage of the king to the fertility goddess in the form of a priestess. This symbolized the regeneration of nature. The Tammuz-Ishtar cult was degrading and thoroughly inconsonant with the chaste worship of Yahweh" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p.1070).

"Tammuz was worshiped throughout Babylonia, and in Assyria, Phoenicia, and Palestine . . . He was the husband of the goddess Inanna, queen of heaven, goddess of love and war, known by the Semites as Ishtar. He was god of the pasture, the patron of flocks and their keepers, and hence was himself entitled shepherd. HE WAS REPRESENTED AS DYING ANNUALLY, BUT

RETURNING TO LIFE. . . . Jerome says that the Syrians celebrated an annual solemnity to Adonis in June, when he was LAMENTED by the women as dead, and afterward his coming to life again was celebrated with songs" (*New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p.925).

According to this authority, the annual feast of Tammuz was held in the temple of Aphrodite (Ishtar, Easter or Semiramis). It lasted seven days, beginning with a commemoration of the disappearance of the god. There followed a search for the missing god by the women. When his image was found in one of the gardens, a celebration followed with lewdness and songs. The image was then confined, the wound made by the boar which legend says slew him was shown on his body. "The people sat on the ground around the bier with their clothes rent, and the women raised loud lamentation" (*ibid.*).

Tammuz, known as Adonis, was the paramour of Venus. At Byblos, the Syrian women wept for him, and in wild grief tore their hair, "and yielded their persons to prostitution, consecrating the hire of their infamy to Venus; next followed days of rejoicing for his return to the earth . . ." (*Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary*, vol.II, p.227).

Says the *Adam Clarke Commentary*,

"He is fabled to have been a beautiful youth beloved by Venus, and killed by a wild boar in Lebanon. . . . The women of Phoenicia, Assyria, and Judea worshipped him as dead, with deep lamentation, wearing priapi [images of male sex organs] and other obscene images all the while, and they prostituted themselves in honor of this idol. Having for some time mourned him as dead, they then supposed him revived, and broke out into the most extravagant rejoicings" (vol.1, p.444).

Nimrod -- the Mighty Rebel

This slain pagan sun-god was none other than Nimrod, who steered the world into rebellion against the laws of God after the Flood, and established the first world "kingdom," over which he ruled as the first tyrant (Gen.10:8-12). He was a "mighty hunter," and promised the people protection by herding them into cities, which he then formed into a "kingdom," which he ruled with despotic authority. He was eventually slain, at the behest of Shem, the son of Noah, and his body carved up into pieces to show the people the fate of those who plunged into idolatry. But the people, at the behest of his wife Semiramis, bewailed his death each year in the "Babylonian mysteries," and worshiped him as the "sun-god," or Baal (the Phoenician or Hebrew word means "Lord"). The mourning for Tammuz, then, was the annual wailing for this wicked priest-king of Babylon who led the world into rebellion!

Tammuz, or Nimrod, was also known as Bacchus, that is, "The Lamented One" (see Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p.21). He was the "husband" of Semiramis, but is also represented as her son.

After the death of Nimrod, Semiramis had an illegitimate son (she was "Venus," remember, a paragon of unbridled lust and licentiousness!), whom she also foisted upon the world as the "son of God," or the reincarnation of her husband come back to life!

The Lamented Death of Nimrod

Since Tammuz or Nimrod was also known as the Egyptian god Osiris, Egyptian legends tell us Osiris met with a violent death, around which the whole idolatry of Egypt turned. Hislop writes:

"The death of the great ringleader of the apostasy was not the death of a warrior slain in battle, but an act of judicial rigour, solemnly inflicted. This is well established by the accounts of the deaths of both Tammuz and Osiris. The following is the account of Tammuz, given by the celebrated Maimonides, deeply read in all the learning of the Chaldeans: 'When the false prophet Thammuz preached to a certain king that he should worship the seven stars and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, that king ordered him to be put to a terrible death. On the night of his death all the images assembled from the ends of the earth into the temple of Babylon, to the great golden image of the Sun, which was suspended between heaven and earth. That image prostrated itself in the midst of the temple, and so did all the images around it, while it related to them all that had happened to Thammuz. The images wept and lamented all the night long, and then in the morning they flew away, each to his own temple again, to the ends of the earth. And hence arose the custom every year, on the first day of the month Thammuz, to mourn and to weep for Thammuz' (*The Two Babylons*, p.62).

Egyptian mythology shows that their god Osiris, or Nimrod, was slain not by open violence or in battle, but through a "conspiracy" by one whom they called "Sem" -- most likely the patriarch Shem, the son of Noah, who undoubtedly was still alive at that time -- who entered into an agreement with 72 of the leaders of Egypt to capture him, put him to death, and then cut his dead body into pieces which were sent throughout the country (p.63). Seventy two was the number of judges, both sacred and civil, in Egypt required to determine the punishment of one guilty of so high a crime as that charged to Osiris. Naturally, among the apostates this act of summary vengeance and execution was abhorrent and grossly evil. They mourned the death of their "god," and referred to the chief architect of his demise as "Typho," or "The Evil One."

Legends have Tammuz slain by the tusk of a wild boar. The tusk, a "horn in the mouth," symbolized the power of the mouth, or the power of persuasion, the very power with which "Sem," the primitive Hercules was endowed. Wilkinson notes that Typho was also called "Seth." Both "Seth" and "Shem" are synonymous and mean "the appointed one." The name "Shem" also means "to desolate, or lay waste," which is exactly what this son of Noah did to Nimrod!

Shem was the son of Noah whom God blessed (Gen.9:26). He was adamantly opposed to the worship of the starry host of the heavens and idolatry. As the son of Noah, he was a great patriarch and leader. He was the ancient Egyptian Hercules who fought against the Giants (Nimrod and his fellow tyrants) "by the power of the gods" (i.e. by the Spirit of God). Shem and the Egyptian Sem were one and the same. The Celtic Hercules, called Hercules Ogmios, in Chaldee is "Hercules the Lamentor." The appellation fits Shem perfectly, for he it was who saw the vast apostasy that occurred after the Flood during his day, and having personally

experienced the catastrophe of the Flood, this apostasy no doubt grieved him to his very soul. He lived 502 years after the Flood, with no less than seven generations of his lineal descendants dying before him (Gen.11:10-32).

The apostasy spread like wildfire, with a fury that must have grieved and devastated Shem.

The Paganization of Christianity

Says Hislop, "It was an essential principle of the Babylonian system, that the Sun or Baal was the one only God. When, therefore, Tammuz was worshipped as God incarnate, that implied that he was an incarnation of the Sun" (p.96). Connected with his worship was a pagan "Lent" of forty days. Hislop adds,

"Among the Pagans this Lent seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz, which was celebrated by alternate weeping and rejoicing . . . being observed in Palestine and Assyria in June, therefore called the 'month of Tammuz;' in Egypt, about the middle of May, and in Britain, some time in April. *To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, by a complicated but skilful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity -- now far sunk in idolatry -- in this as in so many other things, to shake hands*" (*ibid.*, p.105).

The "sign" of the pagan Tammuz was the sign of the "cross." Says Hislop, "That which is now called the Christian cross was originally no Christian emblem at all, but was the mystic Tau of the Chaldeans and Egyptians -- the true original form of the letter T -- the initial of the name of Tammuz . . ." (p.197).

The name Tammuz was equivalent to "god of fire," and was derived from *tam*, "to make perfect," and *muz*, "fire," signifying "fire the perfecter" or "the perfecting fire." As Nimrod was the first "king" or tyrant ("melek" or "molech") after the Flood, it was in honor to him, also known as Tammuz, that the "children were made to pass through the fire to Molech" (II Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35). Those who performed this cruel and horrendous child sacrifice no doubt believed that the "fire" purified their children even as it consumed their flesh. Similarly, Hindu women would burn or immolate themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands in a rite known as *Suttee* -- that is, "pure by burning."

Considering how enormously pagan the custom is of memorializing the DEATH of the pagan saviour Tammuz, by weeping for Tammuz or Nimrod, every spring, when the pagans mentally re-lived the execution of their saviour, and considered it the most horrendous murder of all history, should we even begin to consider that God wants us to WEEP, and follow a similar custom in connection with the death of Christ on the stake or tree?

Nowhere is such a custom sanctioned in the Bible. Nowhere does God command us or encourage us to observe a custom memorializing or commemorating the DEATH of Christ on

the tree. Some claim this is precisely what they do when they observe what they ignorantly call the "Passover" at the beginning of Nisan 14, the night Jesus held His "last supper" with His disciples. That "last supper," however, had NO LAMB served. It was NOT the "Passover." The apostle John very plainly declares, "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. And SUPPER BEING ENDED . . . he riseth from supper . . ." (John 13:1-4). Notice! The supper itself -- a regular meal -- was OVER. Yet, John says, Passover HAD NOT YET ARRIVED! In fact, it would not arrive FOR A FURTHER TWO NIGHTS (see John 18:28; 19:14).

Rather, we are commanded to observe the PASSOVER on the 15th of Nisan which celebrates our DELIVERANCE FROM SIN! Although the emblems of the Passover are to remind us of the suffering and the death of our Saviour, and the price He paid for us, Passover is a VICTORY CELEBRATION of the "deliverance" and "salvation" we receive through Christ -- not a celebration of His death itself! There is a distinct and clear difference between the two concepts. The godly approach emphasizes LIFE; the negative, sorrowful, pagan approach emphasizes DEATH! It celebrates the death of the pagan god Tammuz, Gilgamesh, or also known as Nimrod, the arch-rebel against the true God!

Neo-Pagan "Christian" Customs

However, every spring Roman Catholics, as part of their celebration of Lent, Good Friday and Easter, vividly attempt to virtually re-live the sufferings of Christ. In the Philippines, men even nail themselves to crosses, in imitation, they think, of the sufferings of Christ. Every Sunday, or even on any day of the week, the Roman Catholic Church celebrates its "mass" -- when Catholics commemorate the death of Christ by participating in the "mass." The priests claim that the wafer and wine literally are transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ.

In the Catholic Church, just above the communion rail hanging over the altar is a large crucifix with a dead figure attached. Catholics all assume that the dead figure is or represents the true Christ. However, this is not so. Usually, on every crucifix there is a name-plate. On this name-plate are the large Roman letters I H S. The "I" stands for Isis, the Egyptian goddess, or "Ishtar" ("Astarte" or "Easter"), the pagan harlot-queen Semiramis, wife and mother of Nimrod. The "H" stands for "Horus," another name for the Egyptian "Tammuz" or "son of god," the resurrected or revived "Nimrod," made "pure." And the "S" stands for "Saturn" -- the Roman name for "The Hidden One," Saturn, who was Nimrod, and who fled to Saturnia, the ancient name of Rome, trying to escape from the avenging wrath of Shem.

Thus the Catholic Church, the Mother of Harlots, "Babylon the Great" (Rev.17:3-5), memorializes the death of the PAGAN savior, Nimrod or Saturn, in every mass, every day, every week, and every year! The weekly and daily custom refers to the mass. The yearly custom involves the "weeping for Tammuz," or Nimrod, the false saviour, every spring, bewailing and lamenting his "death."

For true Christians to observe a solemn, sober, austere night in which they think only on

the DEATH of Christ, and partake of a tiny piece of unleavened wafer, and a thimble-sized portion of wine, letting their minds DWELL upon the suffering and misery and horrendous death of Christ, seems awful close to the "weeping for Tammuz" which ALMIGHTY GOD CONDEMNS as a *detestable abomination* in Ezekiel!

Therefore, I must ask, in all sincerity -- is there any place in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, where God asks us to COMMEMORATE or MEMORIALIZE the *death* of Jesus Christ on the stake or tree?

The answer must be a thunderous *NO!* RATHER, we are to observe the Passover, on Nisan 15, as it has ALWAYS been observed, which proclaims (preaches and promulgates) the LIBERTY and SALVATION we receive through the death of Christ in our stead, as our Ransom, He who gave His life that we might LIVE!

The Passover -- Past, Present and Future

Salvation was NOT "completed" long ago, on the cross of Calvary. Not at all! It was merely BEGUN there! The Feast of the Passover makes this plain. It was not ever held on Nisan 14, the day the lambs were slain. It was celebrated the NIGHT of Nisan 15 -- the following Hebrew day -- commemorating deliverance and salvation from Egypt, and from SIN and the power of Satan!

God does not want us to commemorate, therefore, the death of His Son. The Scriptures state: "Cursed is everyone that is hung on a tree" (Gal.3:13). When Christ was hanging on that tree, He had become a "curse." He became SIN for us -- our SIN offering. Therefore, God the Father turned His back on His own Son, to allow Him to DIE for our terrible and many SINS. Paul wrote, "God made him who had no sin to be SIN FOR US, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Cor.5:21). Nevertheless, His death is not the end of the matter. Rather, "Much more then, being justified by his blood, we SHALL be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the DEATH of his Son, much more, being reconciled, *we shall be SAVED BY HIS LIFE*" (Rom.5:9-10).

Therefore, what we are to commemorate is our VICTORY and TRIUMPH over sin, which was made possible only through the DEATH of Christ! We must never forget that fact. We "remember" His death every time we partake of the *Kiddush*, and every night of Nisan 15, when we celebrate the Passover, just as God commanded, over three thousand years ago!

Those who celebrate a day they "call" Passover, at the beginning of Nisan 14, have *no Scriptural authority for doing so*. They may call it "Passover," and mourn and lament, similar to the pagans mourning for Tammuz. But that observance is NOT "the Passover." It is a wholly NEW invention of MEN who are trying to circumvent the plain and Scriptural commandment to observe the PASSOVER, FOR EVER, in every generation!

Let's face facts. Those who observe a Nisan 14 ritual similar to a Catholic "mass" *are not really observing the Passover of God's Word!* They don't do it! They celebrate a ritual "added to" God's commands, on a different day, and in a different manner, which God never

commanded -- and they do it in a manner similar to and reminiscent of that ancient PAGAN practice which Almighty God specifically prohibits and condemns as an ABOMINATION in His eyes -- the practice and annual observance of "weeping for Tammuz" or Nimrod!

Can we scarcely comprehend how diabolical and Satanic such a custom is? Can we not FEAR to do anything even remotely similar to PAGANISM? Can we not see clearly that the somber, sad, melancholy and mournful celebration of the "death" of Christ is a PAGAN PRACTICE BORROWED FROM PAGANISM! Such a practice has no place whatsoever in the Church of the Living God!

Let's not compromise one iota or even one hair's breadth with paganism!

God's Severest Warning

Does Almighty God say it is all right for us to worship Him like the pagans do their idols and false gods? Is it all right to partake of the "Passover" in a wrong, un-Scriptural manner, and to top that off, on the WRONG DAY, and for the WRONG REASONS?

The apostle Paul warned, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER will be GUILTY of SINNING against the body and blood of the Lord" (I Cor.11:27).

The practice of assembling together, as a group, to partake of a tiny wafer or piece of unleavened bread, and a tiny thimble-sized vial of wine, smacks completely of the Roman Catholic MASS and is a Protestant variation thereof! Just because the Worldwide Church of God and various off-shoots, do this once a year instead of every Sunday, it is still PAGAN IN ORIGIN and is most definitely NOT the true Passover celebration, a festival of JOY, including the eating of a joyous and abundant MEAL, and celebrating deliverance and freedom from SIN!

How did Churches get so mixed up?

God does not want His people to compromise with even the tiniest bit of PAGANISM! God called His people OUT of Egypt! He doesn't want His people to go back into Egyptian customs, such as a modern version of "weeping for Tammuz" or "Osiris"! God Almighty thunders,

"Do not defile yourselves in any of these [pagan] ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land VOMITED OUT its inhabitants. But you must keep MY decrees and MY laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do ANY of these DETESTABLE things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you [pagan worship practices], and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Everyone who does ANY of these detestable things -- such persons must be CUT OFF from their people. KEEP MY

REQUIREMENTS and do not follow ANY OF THE DETESTABLE CUSTOMS that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God" (Lev.18:24-30).

God says further,

"Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. YOU MUST *NOT* WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD IN THEIR WAY" (Deut.12:3-4).

God adds, ". . . be careful not to be ENSNARED by inquiring about their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.' YOU MUST NOT WORSHIP THE LORD your God IN THEIR WAY, because in worshiping their gods they do all kinds of DETESTABLE THINGS the LORD hates [such as mourning or weeping for a "dead saviour"!]" (Deut.12:30-31).

"For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]? . . . Therefore COME OUT from them and BE SEPARATE, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" (II Cor.6:14-17). This is *very important* in God's sight. How important is it to you?

BY WHOSE AUTHORITY?

Let us recapitulate briefly the facts, as they are revealed in the Bible -- the Word of God. Originally, God gave the Passover to His people when they came out of Egypt, the "house of bondage." He told them they were to sacrifice the Passover lambs "between the two evenings" on Nisan 14 -- or between noon and sunset of the 14th, and then EAT the Passover that night -- which would have been Nisan 15, since sunset begins a new day according to God's calendar (Ex.12:6-8). This day of the Passover celebration -- the 15th of Nisan, when God slew the firstborn in all Egypt and delivered His people Israel -- was to be celebrated FOR EVER, throughout their generations (Ex.12:14). It was sacrificed in the evening, "when the sun goes down" (Deut.16:5-6). The sun goes down in the sky between noon and sunset. After the sun has set, it has already gone down.

Joshua and all Israel observed the Passover when they entered Canaan (Josh.5:10-11) at that same time, slaying the lambs as the "sun went down" and eating the Passover on the night of Nisan 15. All Israel kept the Passover at this very same time, as God commanded, during the days of king Hezekiah of Judah (II Chron.30:1-18). In the day of king Manasseh, the king apostasized from the truth of God and led Israel into rebellion. But later, king Josiah of Judah also led all Israel to celebrate the Passover as God commanded (II Kings 23:21-22; II Chron.35:1-19).

Jesus and His parents, Joseph and Mary, observed the Passover, according to the custom of the Jews (Luke 2:41-42). All His life, Jesus observed the Passover and kept all the commandments of God (Mat.5:17-19). During His ministry, He and the disciples kept faithfully the Passover at the very same time. The last year of Jesus' ministry, however, He did

not observe the Passover with the disciples -- because that year He BECAME our Passover lamb, dying for our sins on the stake (I Cor.5:7). The "final supper" or meal He ate with His disciples in the "upper room" was not the Passover, but just a final meal about 48 hours before the celebration of the Passover would occur.

Of that final meal, the apostle John says, "It was just BEFORE the Passover Feast" (John 13:1). The next morning, when Jesus was brought before Pilate, after He had been scourged and whipped, it was still "the day of Preparation of Passover" (John 19:14). When Jesus was crucified, and died on the stake (John 19:28-30), the afternoon of Nisan 14, the Jews were slaying the Passover lambs at the Temple of God. Thus Jesus' death fulfilled perfectly -- right on time -- the Passover sacrifice! At that time it was still "the day of Preparation, and the next day [Nisan 15] was to be a special Sabbath [the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover was to be EATEN and celebrated by the people!]" (John 19:31).

Thus the Passover has always been observed on Nisan 15. Jesus kept it at that very time. The Jews have always observed the Passover on that special high holy day. The apostles observed it at the very same time. They never changed or deviated from God's commandment.

The question must be asked, therefore: **BY WHOSE AUTHORITY WAS THE PASSOVER CHANGED BY SOME TO 24 HOURS EARLIER, AT THE BEGINNING OF NISAN 14?** This change is completely contrary to Holy Scripture. It has no foundation in the Bible. It is an institution of MEN. It is not the Passover!

Now at one time Herbert W. Armstrong thought that the original Jewish Passover was held at the beginning of Nisan 14. He thought that the time the lambs were slain was at "twilight," which he thought was between sunset and dark, when the stars come out. Therefore, he assumed and believed that the Passover lambs were slain after sunset of Nisan 13, and then eaten that same evening. That is the reason he led the Worldwide Church of God to celebrate the Passover on the beginning of Nisan 14.

However, research has proven that Herbert Armstrong's assumption of when the Passover lambs were slain was wrong. Some 200,000 lambs were slain at Passover by the Jews in Jerusalem during the days of the Jewish historian Josephus of the first century. He points out in his history that they were slain in the afternoon, largely between 3 and 5 o'clock. No way could so many lambs be slain after sunset and before the first stars came out, about 20-30 minutes later!

If Herbert Armstrong had understood that the true Passover was slain in the afternoon of Nisan 14, and celebrated and eaten on Nisan 15, then he would have observed the Passover at the same time the Jews do -- and have always done it -- on Nisan 15!

BY WHAT AUTHORITY, THEN, DOES THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD, THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL, AND OTHER CHURCHES, CONTINUE TO OBSERVE A WRONG KIND OF PASSOVER CEREMONY AT THE WRONG TIME AND ON THE WRONG DAY?

They have no authority whatsoever from God or Christ for doing so. They have no authority from the apostles for doing so. The truth is, they have NO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY AT ALL -- they have only their own "human" authority, which is tantamount to saying they have USURPED GOD'S AUTHORITY and arrogantly taken it upon themselves to do as they see fit -- that which seems "right unto a man," but ends in DEATH (Prov.14:12).

By doing this, they have "changed times and laws" of God (Dan.7:25). In doing this they have usurped the prerogatives of God and rebelled against His laws (I Sam.15:22-23), a sin comparable to WITCHCRAFT and DEMONISM!

In Leviticus 23, God says plainly, "These are the LORD's appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim AT THEIR APPOINTED TIMES" (Lev.23:4). To try to observe them at a DIFFERENT TIME and in a different manner is nothing short of REBELLION AGAINST GOD! To do so knowingly and willingly is an act of willful defiance and stubborn presumption which can only lead to the unpardonable sin and the lake of Gehenna Fire!

This is no small matter in God's sight. God commands us to observe HIS FEASTS at their "appointed times" -- not some time else! Not at a different hour on a different day and in a different manner! Woe unto those who trample on the Word of God, and do despite to the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by rebelling against the Word of God and stubbornly following their own customs rather than the PLAIN and straightforward Word of GOD!

Now you know the truth. When will YOU observe the Passover this year? Will you observe some kind of PAGANIZED Passover? Or will you keep and proclaim the TRUE PASSOVER, which has been observed on the same day and at the same time by all the people of God from Moses to Christ, and the apostles? What is *your* decision?