

Well, greetings to everyone.

We are in the beginning of a new Holy Day season and we have observed the first of the commanded annual assembly of God's people. It was Passover. Passover is the beginning of God's plan for entrance into Elohim, into His Family. As these days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread picture, once a person has received of the Passover into their life they can then begin the journey out of spiritual Egypt, out of spiritual bondage as they engage in seeking to become unleavened in life, coming out of the captivity of sin.

Every annual Holy Day season God's ministry is commanded to focus upon the meaning of these days that we observe as we assemble before God in the time *He has appointed* that we are to observe. To me it's exciting here as we're going to begin, starting here in this particular sermon anyway, to go back to Leviticus 23 where God has us focus upon, has His people focus upon the commanded seasons that we come to, whether it be even the weekly Sabbath that's spoken of there in Leviticus 23, but especially the annual Holy Day season and those things that we're to speak about, that we're to talk about. And I think of the sermon series that we have just gone through talking about the virtue of truth. And I think that is such an awesome thing, to think about that as we go through Leviticus 23. Because we generally do this (I believe we do this at least several times in a year), we go through things in Leviticus 23 and we go through each section at least once a year, and probably a few other times as well when they're mentioned. So we go through these things on a regular basis, and if we're not careful, again, *even God's Holy Days* and the awesomeness of what He's giving to us does not carry the kind of impact that it should have on our lives spiritually. And that goes back to that sermon given about the virtue of truth and how excited are we that we have these things, that we know these things?

We're going to go into some things in the beginning of this sermon here, or in these verses at least, that the Church hasn't always understood. We're going to go through some things that were not known by Philadelphia. We're going to go through some things that were never known during the period of Laodicea. We're going to talk about some things that God only revealed after the Church became a remnant from the Apostasy. And to me that's exciting, that's inspiring! But if we're not careful we lose the impact of the importance of those kinds of things and don't realize that there are thousands and tens of thousands of people in God's Church who have had the opportunity to be in God's Church, the opportunity to be called into God's Church (not necessarily chosen), but that blessing as tens of thousands called never had that opportunity to know about some of these things we're going to discuss, like "bane ha erebyim" and what that means in Hebrew, "between the two evenings." That's always been a kind of a mystery to the Church and what it really meant. But your eyes are opened to know and to see things in an end-time before the coming of Jesus Christ that are

awesomely inspiring. And every time we go through them we should be ever so thankful. And the more thankful we are the more *inspiring* these things are going to be.

So let's start here in **Leviticus 23:1—And the Eternal spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, Concerning the feasts,** and we know what this means, "the appointed times," "the appointed meetings." We understand that this isn't the word for "feasts." I don't know of anyone in Worldwide, during the time of Worldwide that really grasped this, that really went back to see the difference in what these things are saying. It wasn't taught by the ministry - at least not the ministry I ever heard. And so to understand this is such an awesome thing. This isn't the word for "feast." It's the word for "appointed times," or "appointed meetings." We know, just like keeping appointments that we have, appointments to keep, this is the most important for us, that which is listed by God as He commands us, appointments that we're to keep with Him, before Him as we assemble before Him, because it's about assembling before God and before Jesus Christ.

**Concerning the feasts/appointed times/appointed meetings.** Not the word for "feasts." It's "the appointed meetings." And in some places here in the beginning it's just talking about the weekly Sabbath. And it's a time to *keep* before God, to assemble before God, an appointment week by week.

**Concerning the appointed times/appointed meetings of the Eternal, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations,** assemblies before God. Commanded assemblies to come before God at His time, at His appointed time. ...**even these are My,** again, not the word for "feasts," **My appointed times.** That which God has given to us! **Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest.** So here we have the first commanded assembly and it's one that's to be kept every seventh day, every week, once a week at the end of the week on the seventh day throughout the year. **But the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation.** A time for God's people to come together. What a beautiful thing, a time to assemble before God. You may be by yourself, but you're commanded to assemble before God. You may listen to a sermon on your computer on that day, or something that's been downloaded, but you assemble before God, before Jesus Christ. Spiritually you pray to God. You ask for His help, His blessings of being able to receive what He has for you at that time. That's awesome! During a commanded assembly.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, you may not be with the larger groups of people who are gathered together at a place that has been appointed by the church as a place that people can assemble together, in that particular case in a unique fashion, but not everybody can come to those locations. Not everybody can afford to go there. Some people can't do it. We have a lot of people that are getting older, that can't attend because of health, because of health reasons, because of age and mobility and so forth. And so there are different reasons why people are not able to assemble at a site that has been set up by, that is being organized by the church for people to be able to come together for that unique experience. But they're still able to do exactly this, to assemble before God spiritually. And we are all together on that day in assembly before God on a spiritual plane.

So again, speaking of the Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath - **the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; you shall do no work therein. It is the Sabbath of the Eternal in all your**

**dwellings. These are the,** again, not "feasts." **These are the appointed times of the Eternal.** They're from God. They're important to God. And they're important to us. And the more important they are to us, the more we esteem them, the more we elevate them in understanding the virtue of truth, the importance, the awesomeness of what God is sharing with us, the more thankful we are for that the more we're going to be able to receive from what God has for us.

So **these are the appointed times of the Eternal, even holy convocations,** commanded assemblies, **which you shall proclaim in their,** not "season's," not "feasts," **that you shall proclaim in their appointed times.** During that time. That's why we know in the ministry that we are to talk about these things specifically. When we're in a specific Holy Day we're to speak about those things that pertain to those days. So **you shall proclaim in their seasons.** And, of course, we understand the seasons that are given as far as a weekly Sabbath, and that there is a wide range, anything that God gives or inspires over a broad spectrum of things, that are important for us to learn, timely things that we need to see as a body, as a Church, and so forth that He gives week by week. But annually, it's a specific focus.

**Verse 5—In the fourteenth day:** *In* that day! I marvel when I read these things and we go through these things and I think of all the deception, all the things that have happened in times past, the battles that have been fought. I mentioned that recently in that series, *The Virtue of Truth*, just talking about the Sabbath and how people tried to build bridges towards others concerning Passover that believed in a 14/15<sup>th</sup> Passover. It doesn't say, "In the fifteenth," it says, "in the fourteenth day," or "on the fourteenth day." It really doesn't matter, it's on the fourteenth. It's never into the fifteenth day, having anything to do with Passover. So simple. So basic. But people got so messed up in these things. It can happen. It's happened to thousands and thousands of people who have gotten mixed up. And if anyone thinks it can't ever happen to them, they don't understand their own nature, they don't understand the power that exists when an individual begins to stray away from, is not stirred up in spirit as he needs to be.

Just like that attitude of Laodicea that we've been talking about in this past series here, about the virtue of truth, we have to be on guard not to allow again a Laodicean type of spirit into our lives individually, one of becoming lax or thinking we have so much and letting ourselves, spiritually thinking that we have so much by knowledge (which we do), but not having the appreciation and the humility that should go with that, to understand we can't keep that unless God continues to dwell in us. We don't have the ability. So the thing that takes place is that people begin to take for granted those truths, to take for granted the truths that God has given, to let them begin to not have the kind of important impact that they should have in our lives when we think about them. Because, again, we can begin to devalue, we can begin to minimize by even neglect, by falling asleep, by beginning to drift away spiritually into a kind of lethargy, a complacency, a lukewarmness. And we have to be on fire! And that's why that lukewarm era, the lesson that was there, had to go through what it did. Because that's not acceptable for God with God's spirit. We can't get to a point where we straddle the fence or we become lukewarm, not zealous anymore, not filled with zeal and

excitement for God's way of life. If we begin to lose that excitement something's happening in our lives spiritually, some sin. Something's taking place. Whether it's just neglect on our part, whatever it is, neglect in prayer, neglect on focusing upon the things that God asks us (tells us) to focus upon.

So again here, awesome what God gives to us, that we can be stirred up by His spirit, that we must be. Because His spirit needs that, requires that in order to live fully within us. It is a power. It is a power that gives life and strength. And if we're not using that power and we begin to minimize that power and we begin to cut off that power then that excitement begins to go away. It just can't be there. And so that's a good measure sometimes of looking at one's life. Are we *excited* about God's way of life? Are we stirred up by, moved by, motivated by those things that we hear?

So, **In the fourteenth day of the first month at even.** "At even." And it's a unique word. It's that word I mentioned toward the beginning here, "bane ha erebyim," which is Hebrew meaning, "between the evenings." Between the evenings. So **In the first month, between the evenings is the Eternal's Passover.** Now, what the Church hasn't understood, what the Church did not understand during Philadelphia, what the Church did not understand during Laodicea was this expression. It was generally taught that this expression meant from the moment that the sun sets, at the evening time, when the sun disappears a new day begins. From that moment, when there's still some twilight, some light coming from the sun in the horizon and it's not totally dark yet, it's not totally night, to the point where it becomes what one would consider no more twilight, no more light from the setting of the sun, that that period is "between the two evenings." Now, how you measure that I have no idea! How you go from the point of saying, "Okay, no more twilight, now it's just totally black. It's totally night." But people have tried to do that and feeling that this was a specific time to the keeping of the Passover. It wasn't! It wasn't when Christ observed it. It wasn't what we read about toward the end of his life on that Passover night and the things that took place on that night.

So again, so much to be learned from here. But what it means, that *in* the fourteenth day, is very specific, "between the two evenings." The evening that begins with the fourteenth and the evening that ends the fourteenth day, *in that* fourteenth day of Passover it is very specific - between one sunset to another. Now we today, we can look at that and say, "That's so plain! That's so simple! That's so easy to be understood." But it wasn't before because it wasn't given yet. The ability to "see" that was not there in those who had God's spirit living and dwelling within them, *even powerfully so* in so many people; they couldn't "see" it until God gave it, until God gave them the ability, until God gave *us* the ability to begin to see something. And then it becomes very simple, very clear, very plain, and we have it. And if we're not careful we begin to diminish from, we begin to devalue the awesomeness of that truth that so many before us have never known. But it's an awesome truth to understand! It keeps away confusion. It keeps away any kind of thought about reading things into other scriptures and to begin to think that something of the Passover was ever kept on into the fifteenth.

You think this is important before God? That we understand? That we're able to see these things? Because *thousands* have been deceived by it before us because they *didn't* see it; it wasn't that clear

to them. So, awesome truth, exciting truth that God has given to us. It should move us. It should excite us. And here we're just starting talking about Passover.

So here is where it all begins, in this verse 5, "In the fourteenth day of the first month, between the two evenings, is the Eternal's Passover." It all begins here. It is the *Eternal's* Passover. It's not man's in the sense that it was given by man, in the sense of when the lamb was put to death and killed. It was from God to man. It wasn't like the sacrifices. Sometimes people think about that when they think about killing an animal and their part in eating of the sacrifices offered up before God. They didn't... This was not sacrificed before God, this was God's sacrifice to man. It was His Passover gift, blessing to mankind, and it was done with great sacrifice, I might add. It's what God has given man and not what man gave to God. This is so basic and it's so important to understand. Nothing that man sacrificed made the Passover possible. Nothing. But it's a matter of what God has sacrificed for man.

In times past we have covered what God has sacrificed in order to make possible the creation of His Family, Elohim. Couldn't help but think about some of that as I went through this and thinking about this section, these verses. I think about some of those sermons that God has given in recent times - not that distant in the past - where God magnified the importance to us of what He sacrificed, what He has sacrificed for so long, for so, so long, from the very beginning what He knew He was sacrificing in order for the creation, to make possible the creation of His Family, Elohim.

We have covered how that in the very beginning He sacrificed peace as He created the angelic realm. Incredible understanding. God knew. He knew that by the very manner in which He was going to create the angelic world, the only way that it could be created, the *only way* it could have been done for spirit beings of spirit composition of spirit minds of free choice, apart from God, not having the holy spirit in them but having that spirit in a spirit mind and body, of what would happen in time. That some would choose...that some would choose the opposite of peace. And that's exactly what happened. And all for a purpose and all for a plan God allowed it all. It's most incredible to understand, the things that God is blessing us to see and know, that people in Philadelphia didn't grasp, that people in Laodicea did not know. They did not understand the very things that I'm talking to you about now. But again, if we're not careful they become a norm for us. They become something that we do know and we don't grasp sometimes the sacrifice, the power, the blessings, the things that went into giving us what God has given to us, the importance, the might, the meaning, the depth.

So again, with that knowledge, with that understanding should come a great response from us, a deep gratitude and thankfulness. And to understand, indeed, how richly blessed we are. It is not ours but God's that He has given it to us. And the reason we're able to continue in it is because He sustains that within us. Otherwise, we'll lose it, just as so many before have lost. Even those who have come into being blessed to be a part and associate with the remnant have lost such basic things. Awesome to understand what God has given to us.

So again, we have talked about those things, of what God sacrificed. He sacrificed peace. But His desire, again, is for peace, Jerusalem, "salem," peace, that it's brought back in His plan, but brought back in a way that it will be there for all time, a process whereby such sacrifice in time will bring about true peace. And so there are great lessons for us to learn from that as well, of what it means to sacrifice to give to others.

So we've looked more closely at what it really means to sacrifice. We truly have. We've been blessed to see those things in past many years. I want to review that again, because it's a good review and it's truly important that we grasp this deeply, the definition of sacrifice. Because the Passover is God's sacrifice to us. In religion, you know a common thought or meaning of that, of something offered up (as an animal in other words) as a sacrifice, in a sacrifice, generally up on an altar to some deity. That's generally how that word is used. That's how that word is thought of when people think of the Old Testament. And this is, again, the most common thought that people read about or think of when they think of sacrifices in the Old Testament. But all of that in the Old Testament was for the purpose of leading to greater lessons and understanding that should be gleaned from the sacrifices. And yet those things aren't there until God works with us on a spiritual plane, works with those who are begotten of His holy spirit.

So again, the definition of sacrifice that we must come to understand and embrace is this. This is the meaning that we need to see and grasp in our lives: "To forfeit or give up one thing for another thing considered to be of greater value." That's what God did when it came to peace. At that time a willingness to give up the peace by a creation, of what He did that there would still be peace there for a time, but knowing by what He was doing that there was going to be a sacrifice made, there was going to be suffering, there was going to be that which was not going to be easy to watch, to observe, to see. You know, when you see others suffer because of their sins, when you know they're not living as they should be, and their refusal then to acknowledge they're causing this themselves to themselves, but they strike out at others, to blame others, to blame God, to blame a parent, to blame some other authority, some minister, whatever it might be, but not themselves.

So again, that definition I was talking about here to look up, to think about. It's not a matter of something we think about in the Old Testament, of something that's offered upon an altar, but instead it has a meaning for us, "to forfeit or to give up one thing for another thing considered to be of greater value." So the greater value was peace in the Kingdom, to know that that's the only place that it can exist through time, is in God's Family. In order to attain to that, in order to come to that there had to be sacrifice in the meantime, until true peace in a large family could be attained. So "the giving up," again here, "of something valued or important for someone or something else considered to be of more value or importance." That is what genuine love is all about. That's what genuine love is all about. That reflects that. That willingness to sacrifice, it reflects the mind, the being of God. It reflects agape and it's something we should strive to attain to, to live within us in our relationships toward God, in our relationship toward one another.

So this example from God, which is an example for us about this matter of sacrifice, is the same example Jesus Christ went on to fulfill as our Passover, because he continued on with the sacrifices of God. That's what he was doing. He was yielding to God, to God's purpose. To realize, to know, to live sacrifice, to give up, as just exactly what we went through here, "a willingness to forfeit, to give up one thing for another that is of greater value," to be known, to be seen of greater value. So Jesus Christ understood the purpose for His sacrifice, the purpose of what He was doing for others, for the value of what they could glean and profit, the ability to be forgiven of sin *so that* God would dwell in us? Awesome!

Let's go over to **John 10** and let's pick it up here in **verse 1** where Jesus said, **Verily, verily** (truly, truly) **I say unto you, He who does not enter by the gate into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.** You know, that's the way it's been. It's been that way from the beginning, almost from the very beginning as some began to do what they did in order to worship God their own way, a religion that began to develop as a result of that because they wanted something different, they didn't want what God said, they didn't want His way, they wanted some other way to God. And so they made up various things. That's happened even within the Church over and over and over again, where rather than receiving and accepting what God has given in the manner in which He gives it, in which He governs the body, and others then who didn't want that. They wanted something else. They didn't *want* what was given when it was something that was made as a matter of a decision administratively.

I've mentioned some simple things, like make-up. They wanted something else, some other way. They wanted their way. Or Pentecost, they wanted to continue in observing it on a Monday, or they wanted to move to Sunday quicker than the decision that Mr. Armstrong was led to make. And so, incredible - some other way. To do it some other way than the way God says, leads, guides, and directs us and says it should be done. Just like that fourth truth, number one of the eighteen - government. People not understanding how God's government works, or just simply ignoring it even though they'd been told and taught, because they make excuse of why that doesn't apply to them at that specific moment in time.

So anyway, "They enter not by the gate into the sheepfold, but climb up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." So there's only one way to do things. I think of as the children of Israel were being led out of Egypt. They didn't follow the normal way, *highway* as what went before, the way of Shur or the way of the Philistines. There were other areas besides going over to a sea, and that wasn't a way. It just wasn't there. It wasn't possible. But God made it possible. And that's the thing about God, God's way reveals that which can only be accomplished through Him, which He has to give, which He has to lead and guide and direct in. And any other way that comes in the mind of man because he thinks, "Well, that's not going to work. I'm going to go some other way," well, that's a choice.

**But he who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter (gatekeeper) opens.** And so again here, giving a physical analogy of something here of the right way; there's a

right way. And in essence here, this is really talking, Christ is speaking but he's talking about those things that apply to himself and to God, but to himself, that which is going to be given to the Church and how things are going to be accomplished. So again, **To him the porter (gatekeeper) opens; and the sheep hear his voice. And he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.** So those that are drawn by God, that hear what God has given to them, then indeed they have to make choices as to whether they're going to follow what they're hearing. And those that do and yield to that process it says they're led. They're led by God. They're led by Jesus Christ.

**And when he puts forth his own sheep, and he goes before them, and the sheep follows him for they know his voice.** They know wherever he leads. They know where he is leading because they hear that voice. And something for us. For the Church, it's spiritual, an ability to hear something, an ability to know something and a conviction that was made at baptism that one continues to follow through with, that they're going to follow wherever God leads them. Because God leads us to the Church. He leads us to Jesus Christ. He leads us to the care and the protection we're going to be given. And so when that voice that comes through Jesus Christ is given to the Church, we follow that. We follow wherever he leads - to the right, to the left, to stop, to proceed forward, whatever it is.

**And a stranger they will not follow.** And so when that conviction is deep, when it just is exactly like it is in a physical example of shepherding sheep, you know, someone else comes along and they don't recognize the voice. They're not tuned in. But they know the other. It's an awesome thing about a sheep, about sheep and a shepherd, and the shepherd has worked with a flock. And yet even within the Church if we are attuned to God, if we're tuned in to God, if indeed we're doing the things we should be doing on a spiritual plane, then our hearing is going to be able to be sharp. It's going to be sharpened, continually being sharpened. And when something else comes along, some other voice, we'll know it's some other voice. We'll recognize this isn't from God. This isn't from Jesus Christ. And yet I think of the things we have seen, many of us have seen in God's Church. Well, many of us have seen those things even during the remnant body here, of people who have come and people who have gone, that quit listening and went off in some other tangent, went some other way - thief and a robber. Took what they wanted and changed the rest of what they wanted.

Anyway, but it says, **And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him. For they do not know the voice of strangers.** And so that's the way it should be. That's the way it should be within the Church when people hear something that's not right, that that has to be addressed, that that's not right, that that's not what we are, that's not who we are.

**Verse 6—Jesus spoke this parable unto them, but they did not understand what things were which he spoke unto them.** They didn't grasp it. How could they? They didn't have God's spirit. They didn't understand the spiritual intent of something that was given on a physical plane because they could only see things physically. **Then said Jesus to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, that I am the door of the sheep. All who ever come before me are thieves and robbers.** And so again, speaking of those who are called. They're tuned into God. They're tuned into Jesus Christ and they'll follow the way that he leads them. Even within the ministry, within the Church, through apostles

there is that way and they will follow that. That's why Paul talked about it the way he did there; follow them as... or follow him as he followed Jesus Christ, because that's what it's about. But there's an order there and there's something that's recognized as to how the voice of God works and leads and guides and directs us in our lives. It's a part of the process. Anything else is a matter of thieves and robbers.

**...but the sheep, going on here... All that's ever come before me are thieves and robbers but the sheep have not heard them.** So there is that stance that one takes in being able to say that they're not going to listen to, they're not going to follow something else that they haven't been given, that they haven't been led to by God.

He went on to say, Jesus Christ said, **I am the door: and if anyone enter in, in other words here, by or through me, then they shall be saved.** "If anyone enter by/through me," through Jesus Christ, says they shall be saved. There is a certain way to live. There is a certain process, a certain way, all the way that we live in our lives, and whenever we, if we ever do go from the side of that way to some other way, then again here, we're not going to be able to hear, we're not going to be able to follow the lead that God gives to us. So he said, **I am the door: and if anyone enter in through me... or if anyone enter in by/through me then they shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.** Have the blessing, the ability. I think of what it talks about in Hebrews, the ability to come before, to be before the very throne of God because of the Passover, because of being able to be forgiven of sin, that we have way into through the spirit of God, into the Holiest of Holies, into God's very presence. So we're able to go in and out. We're able to be, we're able to have this open access before God, that God hears us. If we've repented of our sins and continue repenting of our sins, to be cleansed then God will be with us and God will dwell in us and He in us - we in Him, and He in us. "And find pasture." God will feed us. He'll give us the things we need. I think of all God is giving. He's given things to us in a magnified way during this period of time as we're approaching the return of His Son, as we're approaching the coming of His Kingdom to this earth in a manner that the Church has never received in history, to a level that the Church has never received in history because of what God is preparing for.

**The thief, it says in verse 10, comes for no other reason but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.** It's about that which is not genuine. It's about that which stays in the court. It doesn't come into the temple but puts on airs as though they're a part of the temple and goes through the motions of that in their life. But secretly in their own life are not living it, are doing other things. They're not really repenting and changing and yielding themselves and listening to God and being attuned to so they can be led by God. **I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.** Again, I think of that series we just went through, *The Virtue of Truth*, talking about the Word, wisdom, the mind of God, that the Word became life, and that power of God's spirit then that comes through the power of His Word, His truth into our lives and how that is light and comes to life, makes life in us. That's what he's talking about here. "I've come that they might have life." That's the kind of life. It isn't just for the sake of existence into eternity, it's for the *kind* of life. It's for the kind

of richness of life, of unity, of oneness, of peace, of like-mindedness with God, of unity and harmony with God's way. And so that's the kind of life when filled with His spirit that makes life abundant and rich.

People can't understand that until they've had that taste of it - like at the Feast of Tabernacles. People who really taste of that on a spiritual plane know that there's something greater. And so week by week, Sabbath by Sabbath, they're sustained and they hold on to those things because they have the experience of what it is. They know there's more because they've experienced even more and they understand by knowledge then, by what God has given in understanding of those things, that there is far more beyond that as we continue on that can be experienced regularly, continually, on a continual basis in life, not just at the Feast of Tabernacles. We're still physical, very much live in a physical world.

**Verse 11—I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.** Passover! Sacrifice for something of greater value. We have to be willing to do that. We have to look beyond ourselves, beyond our own selfishness. That's the lesson, those are the lessons of life that we need to learn, that we need to learn and desire to live, to live sacrifice. It's not convenient. When is the last time you had someone to your home? When is the last time you invited someone out to eat? When is the last time, just on a physical plane, just as a sacrificing of whatever you might otherwise do? When is the last time you went around and tried to talk to different ones that you might not normally talk to on the Sabbath or at the Feast of Tabernacles, when you made that extra effort? When it wasn't as convenient? You know, it's easy to get along with people who are similar to us in personality or whatever it might be, but to step beyond that comfort zone or to step out and approach those who are newer or those that we don't know as well, to try to build up a family? You know, building up a family takes work! You know, doesn't just come by people coming to Sabbath services and then going back home and nothing existing there between anyone else for the rest of the time, just a strict fellowship in Sabbath services. Oftentimes because we are so scattered out that is the primary time, but to make that a little special by going out and eating together or something like that, by having fellowship, by inviting someone along that maybe we don't normally invite? When's the last time we sacrificed to do that? Because it might be a little harder because of different kinds of personalities? And to draw them in? Or to accept them and to bring them in? When is the last time we have done that? When is the last time, if someone were closer or whatever it might be, that we might have somebody over to our home? I know of some people that don't have anybody ever to their home, period! Never! Sacrifice for the Body, for family, so that we are a family? So that we'll be a family?

**I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.** That's the example we're to follow. Sacrifice! To understand our Passover. To understand what it means then as a family and what God has given to us so that we can come out of sin, so that we're able to be freed from bondage, so that we're not entrapped by the world. How many do we want to help? How many do we pray about, that we want to help them to be a part of acceptance on their life, of helping them to

come out of the world, or to be an influence in their life? To say, "You're welcome into my family! I welcome you! Because my family, I am in God's Family. We are together in this. We are a family!"

**Verse 12—But he who is a hireling**, in other words, does what they do in order to get. It's just about the money. It's just about what they're going to be able to get out of it. It's not about what is sacrificed or given. Because that's what it takes. That's what he's talking about here. It's a matter of the sacrifice for something of greater value. Not just for ourselves selfishly, but for others. What are we willing to do for others? And Jesus Christ, we've just observed it, willing to be beaten, willing to have skin ripped off his body, so much so beaten, beaten around his head so that he wasn't even recognized for who he was. If you saw him you couldn't know who it was. And then hung on a pole, nails through his two hands above his head, his feet together and a nail driven through that into the pole and hung up, to be shamed because everybody going by associated him with criminals. "He's a criminal. Look at him! Look at him! He had to be guilty." There was no question about that. "He had to be guilty of something pretty heinous to be up there on that pole like that. They wouldn't have done it otherwise, would they? He wouldn't be up there if he wasn't wrong." Isn't that the way people think? I've learned a lot about that in ways that I never could have grasped to the full level I do now.

**But he who's a hireling, and not the shepherd**. Everyone is to learn lesson like this. Are we willing to sacrifice and how much? ...**whose own sheep are not**, in other words, again here, **But he who is a hireling**, just out for what they can get, **and not the shepherd, whose own sheep they are**, in other words, they don't belong to him so there's not that care and concern. And we have to be able to see that within the family. Is it our family? Is God's Family our family? Do we embrace those that are in God's Family? Do we really? How much? Where is that shown then in our life? Is it just by "Hi," and "Bye," on Sabbath and that's it? Or do we put some effort into it of acceptance? "You are my family! I am in your family! We are in the Family of God."

It says so here, **leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep**. So we have to work at being united. We have to work at being one, at being one family. Doesn't mean people aren't going to make wrong choices and leave and do other things that are foolish, but we should strive to do our part where we can in sacrifice in order to include others. **The hireling flees**. So again, an example is of anyone who is out to get for self. If a person becomes so blinded that all they see is themselves and what they're getting out of it, out of God's calling. I think back into some of the crazy things I've heard in times past. I think about this one church area in particular and I think about how there were people who were complaining because you know, people in the church just aren't just as loving and as friendly as they used to be a long time ago because nobody's inviting me over anymore and inviting me out with them. And you know what my thought was when I heard those things? Almost in every instance those individuals *never, never, never* included anyone else, never invited anyone else, never went out of their way to help anyone else, but they *expected* it of others. Oh, they expected it of others, that others should love them. But they didn't love others. Amazing how that works.

**Verse 13—Again, The hireling flees, because he is a hireling, and doesn't care for the sheep.**

**Verse 14—I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.** Awesome saying, "And am known of mine." How well do we know one another? **As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father.** Unity and oneness of spirit within the Body, speaking the same thing. That's what reflects our oneness. And sometimes when individuals, if that isn't the case, they may have... there may be some jealousy, some envy, something else going on in their lives, in their mind that takes away from family - acceptance within the family or acceptance of others in that family. **As the Father knows me, even so I am known of the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep.** That's sacrifice! What are we willing to lay down? What are we willing to expend? What are we willing to put into it in order to be family, God's Family?

**And there are other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: and them I must also bring, and they shall hear my voice.** So speaking into the future there'll be others. And there'll be others in the Church that are going to come along. And they're going to hear the truth. They're going to hear the same thing that we're blessed to hear. **...and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.** And so this will continue on into time. And it will continue on into the next few years here where others are going to be drawn in and become a part. Difficulties, problems in their own life, things that they're going to have to overcome and the patience we exercise in knowing that we haven't gotten to where we are now without going through a lot, and so we're willing to be patient as others were with us - loving, accepting, and bringing us into a family and sharing with us in a family. Not looking down upon us but sharing and bringing us in. One fold. One Family. One truth. One way. Unity. Harmony. Oneness. Peace.

**Verse 17—Therefore, does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.** He knew who he was. He knew what he was called to do. He knew what was before him. And that willingness to do it. And we have to know who we are and that we must make those choices in our life, to lay down our life. It's not about our life. It's not about what we want. We are purchased with a price, thankfully so, so that we can have true freedom, so that we can have something that's true in our life, to be able to come out of sin as these days picture, the blessing of being able to come out of Egypt, out of Assyria, out of Babylon, out of confusion and into that which enlightens and gives great life.

**Verse 18—No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself.** We have the free choice, each and every one of us, to lay down our life, ourselves for the benefit, for the sake of others, for something that's greater, for the family. **I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this commandment of my Father.** So again, the definition of sacrifice that we might grasp and exercise in our life as well, because that's what we're to do. We're to follow the example of Passover. It's a part of our coming out of sin. It really is. It's a part of our coming out of being selfish. It really is! It's about our coming out of selfishness because that keeps us in bondage! That's what bondage is about. It's about doing our own will, going our own way rather than God's. We don't want to be a thief and a robber. We want to do things the way God says to do it. Truly!

So again, this definition, "To forfeit or give up," in essence, "one thing for another considered of greater value." That which we *know* is of greater value. "The giving up of something valued or important for someone else considered of more value or importance," in other words, whatever that might be in order to help develop that and bring that along.

So again, as we have just observed the Passover and now are in these days of Unleavened Bread, let's focus a little more upon our Passover who makes it possible for us to be on our journey out of spiritual bondage, as I've said, out of spiritual Egypt, as we're learning how to sacrifice in order to become unleavened and to continue out of sin. Because this is what it's about. It's about receiving of our Passover. And a large part of receiving our Passover is not just selfishness on our part so that we can have an opportunity to receive of God's life into us, but it's to be a part of it, it's to enter into Christ's sufferings, it's to know what it means that we must learn to sacrifice. We must follow that example of Jesus Christ in order for us to grow, in order that we be able to grow, in order that we can continue to come out of sin, to come out of spiritual Egypt. Because if we don't do that, if we are selfishly motivated in thinking and applying that and not doing the work we need to do and our acceptance and receiving one another, then we're not continuing in the journey out of sin like we should. We're staying in it. We're staying in bondage. Those things are bondage. We have to get rid of that in our own life and help others. That helps others then to be able to get rid of bondage. The more family, in essence, of becoming family that we engage in, the more of living the things that God has given us in order for that to be possible, well, the richer our lives become, the more meaningful our life becomes, the greater the family is.

So again, so after Jesus Christ ate his final Passover together with the disciples and had instituted the new symbols for Passover he went up with them up into the Mount of Olives where he prayed and also taught those things that we read much about on the night of Passover itself in the book of John. We go through those things and we read many of those scriptures of those things that Jesus Christ taught after he instituted the new Passover, after he'd prayed for a time, and after this, again is the account of the dark hours, the early morning of the fourteenth. And so it went into late night and early morning hours of the fourteenth that Judas and the soldiers, they came to get Jesus. This was a period of time here then, quite a bit of time had passed by the time they had instituted or had the symbols of the New Testament instituted, did the footwashing amongst themselves - Jesus Christ did, anyway, toward them - they age the bread and the wine. And this was after supper. And this was rather late in the evening there because they'd already had to have the lamb killed and begin to roast it and they were ready to eat. Then after Passover had started they ate, they did the physical part of it, but then Jesus Christ instituted the new part. And then went up to the Mount of Olives and he prayed there for quite some time, as you go back and look at the account. And then he spent much time with them talking to them and teaching them, and things that are recorded there in his own prayers to God the Father, of things that he said.

Let's notice that in John 18. This is getting toward the end of some of that, of what was spoken on that particular night, when we read about that in John 14, 15, and 16. And here is **John 18:1**, it

says, **And when Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, into the which he entered with the disciples. And Judas also, who betrayed him, knew the place. So he knew the place where they would go and gather together on certain occasions. And for Jesus resorted there often with his disciples. So this was a kind of a custom of things that they did, especially revolving around a Holy Day season like this and what was getting ready to take place.**

**Verse 3, it says, And Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.**

And then dropping on down we come to where Peter drew his sword. We're all familiar with these accounts. But again, what an incredible event. What an incredible betrayal. The first, if you will, great betrayal of Jesus Christ, of something that would lead to or be used in a focus of something that would be far greater later on within the Church itself, when the man of sin, the son of perdition would be revealed.

**Verse 10—Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then Jesus said to Peter, Put away your sword into its sheath. And it says, The cup which my Father has given me, shouldn't I drink it? So whatever it is we go through, whatever it is we're to do, shouldn't we do it? If there are things before us that aren't easy in life, shouldn't we go through it and learn from it whatever we can, whatever comes into our life, whatever is a part, sometimes, of time and chance itself that God will use to mold and fashion us, other things that will come along and happen that God will work with in order to help us in our life? Some things God will intervene in because that's not specifically what He's using when those things happen in a normal routine of events of life. Sometimes God will intervene to prevent certain things from taking place because so that.... that's not what we're being molded and fashioned, and so He'll give us quicker intervention. But if there is something to learn, of something that comes along, He doesn't bring those things upon us. He doesn't *make* those things happen to us. Some things he will lead us in depending on the importance of something that has to be fulfilled or accomplished, that has to be done in a certain way to be fulfilled prophetically, to be fulfilled in a greater scheme of things, of something that God is working out. But He's working with every one of us individually in our lives, molding and fashioning us and preparing us for something in the future. Every one of us. And some things He intervenes, some things He'll intervene in a health issue and heal completely and entirely. Some things He'll let us go through something so something else can be learned. Some things he'll let us go through the entire suffering for years and years and years because there is something else we're learning through the process if we yield to God's spirit, of what is molding and fashioning us that's different from others. We don't know what that is always. We don't grasp all those things. We can't grasp the mind and how the mind works, especially even individually, because we're all different. But God knows. He knows exactly how to work with us in all the conditions of life that come upon us in life.**

So again here, **Jesus said to Peter, Put away your sword into its sheath. The cup which my Father has given me, shouldn't I drink it?** It's not a matter of trying to do away with it or, you know, we should do what we can within our own means to accomplish and fulfill anything we can in our physical lives, to do better in our life and to work with our health, or whatever it might be, or work with a certain trial that comes upon us financially, or whatever it is sometimes, or in family that comes upon us that we have to learn how to deal with. But, you know, to run away from it or to begin to blame God or blame someone else? Say, "Well, I never bargained for this and this shouldn't be happening to me." That's not the route we follow. We should be willing to bear whatever it is that we're given to carry because there is that which we're going to be able to learn from it, to embrace it, to realize how important it is. Otherwise, God wouldn't be allowing us to go through it. He allows us to go through many things, and many of those things we bring upon ourselves in life. Other things that aren't? Well, you know, again, God allows us to go through the different things because they can be used to help mold and fashion certain things within us. And so God will work with those things to mold and fashion what is needed within us.

John 19. So again here, after this took place he was taken before the Jews, and afterward to Pilate and questioned by both. He was beaten beyond recognition, as I mentioned earlier. We can't really grasp that.

And so we come down here, finally, to **John 19:7**. It says, **The Jews answered him**, speaking of Pilate and what Pilate was saying, as he had found no fault with Jesus. They said, **We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.** So, "Because he did this, he made himself the Son of God, he ought to be put to death!" Now, why were they riled up about that? Because they understood some of the things that were being said. People in this world around us, we're unique in the sense of saying that we're going to become a part of Elohim, a part of God's Family, that we're begotten into it now, impregnated with God's holy spirit, that we're the Kingdom of God in embryo, that we're going to be born into the God Family. That means god's in the God Family! I think of what it says in Philadelphia there, toward the end. We read those verses not too long ago here. He says, "And I will make them who are of the synagogue of Satan to come and kneel before you." And the rest of it goes on and talks about, "And know that I have loved you." To be in the God Family and what that means, that someone is going to be doing that because of individuals who are in the God Family.

And so again here, "because he made himself the Son of God." He didn't hide that. Others heard those things. They knew what was being said, that God was his father. Incredible! **And when Pilate, therefore, heard them say that, then he was the more afraid.** He was afraid. He had a lot ideas about gods and different beliefs and so many things that had to do with kind of thinking in a world that we don't really grasp, because we haven't lived in that kind of a world fully, but of all the different kinds of gods, the superstitious kinds of things they had in their lives. They didn't know and they were in deep confusion. But to hear something like this, all of a sudden, that he was judging someone. He took it seriously because he had found no fault in him. Now, if he had found fault in him

and found that he was a thief or a killer, a murderer or something else, then he might have had some grounds. But on the plane of things he understood, he found no fault with him. And then when they said this and that this was the reason they wanted him dead, man, he was a little bit afraid. He really was.

**And verse 9—And he went again into the judgment hall, and said to Jesus, Where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Are you not going to speak to me?** He didn't help Pilate at all in this respect, of what Pilate was going through. And yet there is that thing of pride of a ruler that individuals will get into and the feelings that are associated with that, and yet there is still that fear he had there. So this was a very unique situation.

**Don't you know that I have the power to impale you on a stake** (on a pole), to have you hung on a pole, nailed to, in essence. That's what he's telling him very clearly. **...nailed to a pole, and I have the power to release you?** And notice Jesus' answer: **You could have no power at all against me, except it was given to you from above. Therefore, he who has delivered me unto you has the greater sin.** Wow! I mean just saying that right now just causes some chills to go up and down my spine, to think of what was happening at that moment in time and what Jesus Christ was saying to him. And Pilate knew full well, that this didn't help him being any less afraid. **And from that moment Pilate sought to release him.** Pilate didn't want to have any part in it. He didn't see any fault in him whatsoever. He was of the belief there was no fault in him and there might be more going on there than what he could grasp or know or understand.

**But the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend! For whosoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar!** So they knew what was being said about Christ, him being the coming of the Messiah. That's why they threw down the branches and everything else as he was coming into Jerusalem. They thought he was coming, you know, they acknowledged him as being a descendant of David. They had a belief, because of miracles and things that were taking place and stories they had heard, that maybe this was the time, as the Jews at different times had the belief and a teaching that a Messiah would come and deliver them from the oppression of the government over them, to deliver God's government. And so this was one of those times that this was really at the forefront because of the oppression that was taking place by the Roman Empire upon the Jewish people.

And so again here, when this was brought to Pilate then this was the reason that Pilate changed then, because if someone else had said they were a king or claimed to be a king and you're not Caesar's friend and you accept this man and you release him and he's claiming to be a king and you're not willing to put him to death because Caesar is the only leader, Caesar is the only ruler... These people were vicious! These Jews, you talk about manipulating and lying and cheating and distortion and twisting of the truth for their own gain; they were quite proficient at it, indeed.

And so verse 13 it says, **And when Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat him down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew,**

**Gabbatha. And it was (this is verse 14), And it was the preparation of the Passover.** And this is speaking about the preparation day of the Passover sacrifices that would be offered after sundown when it would be the First Day of Unleavened Bread. So this is talking about a preparation for that, because after the Passover was over then they had that preparation of the sacrifices that would be offered up and a Holy Day that would be beginning and things that the Jews would go through. And it says, **and it was about the sixth hour.** So it was around 6:00 am in the morning - that's being the Roman method of timing being spoken of in this particular case. Because at different times different writers would refer to that process or the ones that the Jews were using. But this was referring to the Roman period of time in that respect, so it was about the sixth hour, specifically 6:00 AM like we would think of it and the Roman method of time on the Passover day, the fourteenth, which was Wednesday of that particular year. So it was on a Wednesday. And here we are during the beginning here, the early morning, 6:00 AM in the morning and it says, **But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him.** So they were up and at it quite early in the morning. This was the preparation day and the head, the leaders had stirred up a lot of people, had them there, and this matter of the court case, in that respect, before Pilate was taking place. And of course we know of other things that were taking place back and forth - even Herod's involvement.

But again here, it says, **But they cried out, Away with him... crucify him.** And so, again here, **crucify him.** Again, I hate that word, but **impale him on a pole,** is basically what they were saying. "Nail him to the pole!" And that was what their desire was. They wanted to, again, impale him on a pole and put him, the execution there, it was a matter of an execution, of him dying slowly. **And Pilate said to them, Shall I impale on a pole (nail to the pole) your King? And the priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.** And so again here, lying! Anything to get their way, to have him put to death, they were willing to do it.

And **verse 16** It says, **Then he delivered him to them to be impaled on a pole. And they took Jesus, and led him away.** So they knew that he was going to be nailed to a pole and hung up there to die. **And bearing/carrying his stake/pole he went forth into a place called the place of the skull, which is called Golgotha in the Hebrew.** Again here, part of that punishment he had to carry his own pole he was going to be put to death on. And carried it part way, not able to do it all the way, and someone else, obviously, we know the story, had to bear it part way.

**And when they impaled him on a pole, and two others with him, each on one side, with Jesus in between.** So this says, "where they impaled him on a pole," so it shows this is where they went, they went to the place of the skull, called Golgotha, and placed him in between two others, a criminal on each side. Thieves on each side.

Let's pick it up again, the account here. Now let's turn over to Mark 15 and notice part of the story here. Because a lot went into Jesus Christ becoming our Passover. A lot was taught on that particular night about the process that makes it possible for us to enter into a journey of coming out of sin on our way to becoming a part of the very family of God, of being able to be born into the very family of God, in order to go through a process of being able to be transformed on a spiritual plane. What

an incredible thing to understand, our ability to become transformed in our mind, in our thinking, from the way of this world, from that of Egypt, of bondage, of Assyria, of Babylon, all that confusion that's in the human mind, of those who don't know the way of God. And so we're blessed, beginning with our Passover, to begin this journey of coming out of sin, of coming out of that kind of captivity. And it is a long journey for us, it truly is. It doesn't happen overnight. It's a long journey that we're on, a continual battle and a continual fight against self, learning to sacrifice of self. If we're not willing to sacrifice of self, we're not doing the job that we have. And that ties us back into the very things that we've been discussing in the sense of the context here of family, God's family, of a willingness to sacrifice for God's family, for God's purpose in our lives.

So again here, **Mark 15:25—And it was the third hour**, so in this case here being 9:00 AM, beginning of a count from the morning. At 9:00 AM, around 9:00 AM, **so it was the third hour, and they impaled him on a pole**. And so this happened very early in the morning then, mid-morning, and they took him and impaled him on the pole. And it says, **And the inscribing of his accusation was written, THE KING OF THE JEWS**. So it wasn't a matter of a king that was anyone else's, but because of this belief about a Messiah and a king that would come, in essence, this is what this was doing, in essence, in mocking that and the Jews, because the Jews were under the Roman rule. And so this was kind of a mockery. It's *their* king, and certainly not recognized as anyone else's. And so this twist that was put on that that came from Pilate, in essence, to do so was because of what they had done in order to put Jesus Christ to death, by saying that he said he was a king. And so they used that against him because of Caesar and so they got their way and Pilate gave into it.

**Verse 27—And with him they impaled on poles the two thieves; with the one on his right hand, and the other on his left**. So anyone coming by, you know, they wagged their heads and it says here **(verse 28) And the scripture was fulfilled, which said, And he was numbered with the transgressors**. That's how they looked upon him. He's a thief. He was a murderer. Whatever it was. He was a king, he tried to usurp authority, whatever it might be of the Caesar, whatever, people would think and say. And so again, **And they who passed by railed on him, wagging their heads**. That's what people do! Oh, you're a thief. You're a crook. You're a... whatever. They don't put any value then on what's being said, on what he said. They mocked those things. "Here he is! He said all these things and look at him now; he was guilty. He couldn't be who he said he was, I mean, this is proof of that, isn't it?" And that's how they treated Jesus Christ. And so again, as it was said here "He was numbered with the transgressors and they who passed by railed on them, wagging their head," **and they said, Look, you who destroyed the temple, and would build it in three days**. They were just mocking him. "You said these things. We heard, you know, all these things that you have said. You can't take care of yourself now? This happened to you?" So this is proof (to them) that they don't have to pay attention to any of those things. It didn't have to bother their conscience, you know, because here he is. And he has to be guilty or he wouldn't be up there. He has to have no power at all else he wouldn't be up there. Can't be the son of God or else he wouldn't be out there. Can't be the Christ, the Messiah, because he's going to die! He can't be up there! This is hard on the disciples, you know. What are they going to do? They were talking about, "What are we going to do now?"

Because they thought, they believed he was the Messiah. They had this belief - and that's the way it is with so many things prophetically - we really have no idea until some things have happened exactly the manner in which they're going to happen. We can know of certain things, we can know certain... and God has given us more the closer we get to the end. But exactly how they're going to be fulfilled, how He's going to fulfill prophecy is not always known until it takes place, especially with a physical people like this.

Now, within the Church we have been blessed to see and understand much, much more. But even there for us we find that many things we still don't grasp fully and deeply in the deepest sense until certain things have taken place - and especially when we were so weak and asleep when the Apostasy occurred. Who could have known how it was going to occur? A man of sin, a son of perdition, set in a position of authority above the Church (not an apostle) to do the things he did? Incredible!

And so again, people passed by and did these things. And so they mocked him for the things he had to say. And they said in **verse 30**, notice this, mocking him, **Save yourself, and come down from the pole.** Isn't that just typical of the world and the attitude and spirit of the world? Of people who when they might have a bit of their conscience pricked and begin to wonder about certain things and then not liking what they hear, and then all of a sudden having excuse by saying, "Oh see, we didn't need to listen to that in the first place. See, you're all wrong. You were wrong! Blah, blah, blah... He can't save himself so he's not who he said he was!" So it says, "Save yourself and come down from the pole." **Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others, yet he can't save himself.** "You're saying," you know, "he healed the blind, the lame, those different ones that were healed of the various things that they had wrong with them, lepers. He healed them, but he can't save himself. Incredible!" So that put doubt in people's minds that those things even happened. That's the purpose of saying things like this, to take away from what is true.

**Verse 32—Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the pole.** What incredible attitudes! Things that happen to us, things that we go through in life, nothing compared to what the Son of God went through. He was the Son of God. He *is* the Passover. He was the Passover at that time. He is the Passover for all mankind. He is God's sacrifice given to man. He allowed His Son to die such a death, His only son. And so again here, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Passover mocked in such a manner, ridiculed in such a manner, beaten in such a manner, put to death in such a manner by attitudes that exist in the minds of men. Shows the depths that mankind can go to in their hatred to God and God's way of life. **Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the pole that they may see and believe.** So again, what an incredible thing. "If you just do that, then that'll be proof to us and that way people can believe that you are the Christ, the Messiah, if you can come down from that and save yourself." He could have, but that wasn't God's purpose. They didn't know what it meant to be the Passover, that the Lamb of God would have to die, be sacrificed for all of mankind. But in time people are going to have to "eat his flesh and drink his blood," and what that means. Awesome!

Awesome truths that we see and understand the meaning of things that God has given. Exciting, inspiring, awesome truths.

So again here, **Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the pole that we may see and believe. And they that were impaled on poles with him reviled him.** Even the two beside him. And one at one point did stand up for what was said here, but said, for him, but even they got caught up in it. Here they are, going to die the same way, and they got caught up in the same. That kind of attitude is infectious. It is sick. It is perverted. And I think of Christ's prayer on that last night as well when he was praying the Father and what he told them as well. And basically let them know very well if the world has hated me, it's going to hate you. So again here, some of those things contained in these verses that we read on Passover night.

And then in verse 33 it says, **And when the sixth hour** (so it's 12:00 noon) **was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.** So from 12:00 to 3:00 it became dark. Incredible. Darkness covered the entire land.

So let's return to the story flow now in chapter 19, back in John, if you want to turn back to John and returning to this here in verse 31. **John 19:31.** And it says here, **The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation,** in other words, again, all the preparation of the Passover afternoon getting ready for the sacrifices at sundown on the Holy Day. And so this was their concern. There was a preparation day and the First Day of Unleavened Bread was fast approaching there. So again here, it says, later in the day, **that the bodies should not remain upon the stake/on the pole on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was a High Day).** Isn't that amazing what God has given us to know, what is so clear to us that the world just can't grasp? They think he was... They call it "good Friday," because they think the preparation day spoken of there is the weekly Sabbath, because they're so *incredibly ignorant* of the fact that there were annual Holy Days and this was speaking of a High Day. They don't know what a High Day is. They read this and think it's talking about the seventh day Sabbath even, and they have no grasp, no comprehension of things in the Old Testament because they're not taught it. Because preachers in the world don't want to teach those things. And so many of them don't know it anyway, but those who do know it definitely don't want to teach it. They choose not to teach it. They don't want people to understand about anything, in essence, about the Holy Days of God, because then it interferes with what they want to teach and too much knowledge takes away from, causes questions then in their own beliefs in their own religion.

But here it plainly shows, it says that this was a preparation day for the High Day because it was the First Day of Unleavened Bread that was coming, not the weekly Sabbath on Saturday. It wasn't "good Friday" that they like to call it, that this was happening on. That description blows my mind! What was good about it? "Good Friday." Good day that somebody be put to death, that the Son of God be put to death? I know how they twist it and distort it and what they say, but they're sick. It's a sick, sick world that teaches such things. But people don't know that. The people who listen to it, the people who accept it, they don't grasp that. They don't know what's being said. They don't know the hideousness of it because they don't understand God's purpose and God's plan. They just lap up what's

given to them by a world that's... by teachers that lead them in a wrong direction. And we look forward to the time that they're going to be able to do what these days picture, come out of spiritual Egypt, spiritual Babylon in specific here, the Babylon of religion that's out there. The whole world is deceived, confused.

So again here, **So that the bodies should not remain on the pole on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was a High Day).** In other words, it was coming there at sunset. **They requested to Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.** Even that I marvel in. Why break their legs after they've been put up there on that pole? You know we read the story here of the timing involved and what was taking place, that it was about the ninth... about 9:00 AM that they were all three impaled on the stake, on the pole, nails driven through their hands so that they could be impaled on the pole and their feet together. So here they were requesting that their legs might be broken so that they might be taken away. Because it had to do with them dying and being dead. You can't take them down, didn't want to take them down before they're dead, and they weren't dying fast enough so what do you do to make them die faster? How does breaking the legs cause them to die faster? *People don't think!* That one there dumbfounds me. Can't you figure? Can't you think about that just a little bit?

Even with the Church in the past we haven't thought about that, to understand why their legs were broken. It wasn't taught as a whole why their legs were broken. Yes, so they would die, but what does that mean? It means by its very physics that they couldn't have had their arms stretched out on a cross. That in itself proves that it was a pole, just as the Greek word is used there describing a pole, a stake in the ground.

So again here, they came by to break the legs because as soon as they were broken they couldn't push up anymore in order to breathe. Because with your hands above you like that hanging from your hands in that kind of a position, you'd suffocate. And Jesus Christ, his blood had to be spilled to the earth. He wasn't going to suffocate. God made sure of that. And even said, prophesied, not a bone in his body would be broken. That was another prophecy concerning the Passover.

**So they came and broke the legs of the first, as it says in verse 32, and of the other who was impaled on the pole with him.**

**Verse 33—But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they didn't break his legs.** So he didn't suffocate. The others were still alive. They would push themselves up so they could keep breathing and Christ is exceedingly healthy and strong as a young man, so why did he die earlier?

**For one of the soldiers—verse 34—had pierced his side with a spear.** So this happened just previous to this. Soldier had come up there and pierced his side through with a spear. And it says, **and immediately there came out blood and water.** He bled to death right there. It had to fulfill something. *His blood had to spill to the earth as the Passover lamb.* I think about something that

happened here toward the, right after the Apostasy, a teaching that came from one of the evangelists in times past and that many ministers had sat down in his class in Ambassador College. And now some of those people, in one of the scattered groups especially, kind of promoting this idea that he might have suffocated. "You know, he might have suffocated. That might be how he died. It's possible that maybe he suffocated." A strong man like that? As healthy as he was? A young, strong, healthy man who was a carpenter? In those days to be a carpenter you had to be strong. And he was young and healthy, filled with life. And certainly much stronger than the two thieves beside him. And so why did they die first? But see what can happen to the human mind? You know, some other way, some other idea. You can't accept what was true anymore. You can't acknowledge that you've been taught by an individual who was God's apostle and so you can only come up with and say, and you don't even want to say his name anymore, and you refer to, well, you know, he was a good teacher and I learned a lot of good things from him. No, they learned everything from Mr. Armstrong. Everything they knew that was true came through Mr. Armstrong! That just baffles the mind that that's what can happen to human beings when they want to follow some other way, when they want to go some other way! Like a thief and a robber. That's what Jesus Christ was talking about in chapter 10. Something we never want to be. We want to so deeply appreciate and be thankful for the truths God has given to us and to know what we have has come from God and to be thankful for those things and to know that we can lose those things and to value and esteem them highly, the Word, the truth of God that fills our... That's what gives us life. When filled with His spirit, that's what gives us life and stirs up our life. It is the light given to men. Incredible that power that can exist within us.

And so again, it talks about this, a soldier had come up and there came out water and blood. **Verse 35—And he who saw it bare record.** Well, John saw it and he bare record. **And his record is true.** He knew what he saw. He's writing the story about it and he knew exactly what he saw and he knew what had taken place. **And he knows that he says true, that you might believe.** So "He saw that he bare record and his record is true, and he knows that he said true that joy might believe."

So again here, scriptures that talk about those things that are true that God has given. And the truth is here if people want to believe it and fill them with a fullness of life that they otherwise can't have. Because the truth is exciting. It's inspiring. And there is a joy in the truth and the ability to believe what is true.

**For these things were done, that the scriptures should be fulfilled, Not a bone of his shall be broken.** Beautiful! So that not one bone of His should be broken. So again, wasn't going to happen. **And again another scripture said, They shall look up on him whom they pierced.** So again here, it wasn't going to be dying by suffocation, but they were going to look upon him whom they pierced. They were all guilty of his death. And it's a spiritual matter - sin. But they did it. And those who looked upon him and those who were there and those who were participating in the mocking and so forth were all a part.

So again here, although it has already been referred to as we've been going through this sermon, that which follows the Passover should be ever so obvious to us. So let's go back to the basic instruction

concerning this day. **Leviticus 23:5—In the fourteenth day of the first month between the evenings is the Eternal's Passover.** God's Passover. God's sacrifice given to us, given to mankind. And as I read this verse again I can't help but think about what it said so plainly and so simply, "IN the fourteenth day." Not in the thirteenth and not any of it in the fifteenth, but all of it *in* the fourteenth day, between the two evenings that *define* the fourteenth. What a simple, beautiful scripture. And yet hundreds (hundreds!) and even thousands have been deceived into believing something different who were once sitting in services and listening to sermons being given to them.

**Verse 6—And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread.** So this is what follows Passover. It is the beginning of God's plan, the beginning of giving us the ability, of giving us the opportunity to be delivered out of Egypt, to be delivered out of bondage, to be delivered out of sin. And that's what these days picture then. Because of our Passover, because of what he went through, then we can begin that journey, an awesome journey of coming out of sin, of being delivered. **And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast; it is a feast.** We know it's a holy convocation and we know it's an appointed time, but here *is* the word for "feast." It is the Feast of Unleavened Bread **unto the Eternal.** A time to become unleavened unto God, unto the Eternal God. That's our calling, to become unleavened, to be unleavened, to be without sin. He won't dwell in us if there is sin, and that's why we have to repent continually and have the blessing of our Passover so that we can, so that we can continue the journey out of sin and so that we can continue in this process of seeking to be unleavened. We don't want leavening, that which is pictured by being puffed up. Because so much of everything that human beings do that's selfish is a matter of pride.

You know, we're sitting here. We're listening. And there is pride in our lives. And prayerfully we're able to see those things and get rid of it more and more and more. It's about self and it's about how we're able to be puffed up in how we think about ourselves and see ourselves. It's a matter of being humbled and *thankful* that we're able to see ourselves and thankful that we're able to be filled with God's spirit and God's mind and that that's what delivers us.

**Seven days you must eat unleavened bread.** Seven days. Not six and a half, but for seven days. There were those who came along and said we don't have to eat unleavened bread during this period of time. Yes, you do. For seven days. To make sure that you eat some unleavened bread each day because there is something to be learned from that obedience. It is a very physical thing, just the taking of the bread and the wine on Passover night is a very physical thing, but it teaches us something awesomely spiritual and important in our lives that's to be deeply embedded in our lives just as this is here. Seven. Complete. You know, that which shows those things that are complete as a matter of something in God's plan. That which is complete, to be completely delivered out of sin, to be completely delivered out of Egypt. And so all seven days. And we must, throughout our entire life then, seek to be completely unleavened.

Now, we're not, and we know that. And we'll slip. And sometimes we slip even in a physical thing during the days of Unleavened Bread and grab a hold of something. We all have those stories of things that have happened to us at some point in time where we grab something out of habit, out of

whatever it might be, out of not thinking about and focusing on the day like we need to or should have, and we see our weakness as human beings and have some leaven, and because we're just not thinking. We do that in our lives. There are times we just get into a certain habit or we go back and revert back to an old habit, or we get pulled into something and we just don't think about God. We don't think about what we need to think about. And so we fail and we have to repent then so we can continue becoming unleavened and being delivered out of sin.

So beautiful verses here in everything that's being taught here and everything that's being said.

**Seven days you must eat unleavened bread.** So, in other words, to be fully delivered from sin, to come out of sin, fully delivered. Seven days - complete - completeness. Pictured in God's plan just like the seven day week, seven thousand year plan. It's a matter of that which is complete. And so we do that in our lives, whether it be for twenty years or forty years or whatever it is. We continue to fight and work at and seek to come out of sin. And doing this requires sacrifice, doesn't it?

Eating unleavened bread is to eat of the true bread of life, of the word of God, which is to *live* by God's laws, by God's Word, by God's truth. That's why if we don't live by it, exercise, sacrifice in our life in order to be at one, in order to have one family, in order to be one bread, one family of God, if we don't do the things that we need to do, that we should be doing in order to have family, in order to be part of family, in order to bring others in acceptance into that family and receiving them... Do we receive God's family? Again, so much of that about Passover and Unleavened Bread and those things that fit together and what this day pictures.

So again, it's... I want to mention this again about sacrifice. Eating unleavened bread is to eat of the true bread of life, of the truth of God. It's to enjoy it. It's to eat of it. It's to partake of it. We've just gone through and talked about the virtue of truth and truths that God has given to us, His Word, His mind. With the greater truths we have we have more of the mind, able to have more of the mind of God. He's sharing more of His mind with us than He did during Philadelphia or during Laodicea. We're exceedingly blessed because of the time period in which we live. Not because of any goodness of our own. Not because of how great we are. On the contrary, it's not about that! It's about God and it's about the timing of God and it's about His Son who came once as our Passover, who is about to return now as the King of kings. Beautiful! Awesome to be a part of that!

So again, to be fully, completely delivered, to really continually eat of the unleavened bread of life requires sacrifice, action on our part. So eating unleavened bread is to eat of the true bread of life, the Word of God, which is to *live* by God's law, to *live by the truth*. So often in leading up to various Holy Days we have certain sermons that bring us to a certain point. And this year here has been one that has been magnified immensely so because of the kinds of sermons God has been blessing us to have to lead us up to the Passover and this Feast of Unleavened Bread. It's a beautiful thing. It shows order. It shows what God is doing. It's evidence of those very things, and inspiring, and helps us to drink in more and be more deeply inspired by what we have.

So again, to live by God's laws, to live by that truth, to, in other words, seek to be unleavened, eat of the unleavened bread of life, to do those things, that requires sacrifice on our part. Again, the sacrifice of self, of our will so that we live God's will in unity and oneness with Him. Jesus Christ *made* that possible.