

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 3, No. 1

A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be

Jan/Feb 1997

PASSOVER

A Summary of Our Current Understanding

We do not claim to have all of the answers to every question on this subject. We have read hundreds of papers, and there is still more study that we want to do before writing an in-depth document. Nevertheless, there have been so many questions on the subject and so many people are asking "What should we do this year?" that we feel compelled to write our understanding at this time.

All too many Passover papers begin by trying to scare readers. They use the Scriptures to show that the ancient Israelites would have died if they did not keep the Passover on the right day. Then verses such as John 6:53 are quoted to imply that readers will lose their salvation unless they keep the Passover at the right time.

While we should make every effort to seek the Eternal and His way with all of our heart (Deut 4:29), we need to step back and ask: "What is our Father in heaven doing?" Is He sitting in Heaven trying to trip up his children on complex technical subjects so He can send them to the grave and the second death? No, He "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2Pet 3:9).

Yes, timing was critical for the first Passover, but the Eternal provided a prophet (Moses) to be among His people and tell them exactly when to do it. That first Passover appears different from Passovers of succeeding years in several key ways. If you are beginning a study of the Passover, we highly recommend you stop right here and carefully read Exodus chapters 11 and 12.

In the first Passover, there was no command for "unclean" people to not eat it—everyone could eat it. All the commands regarding ceremonial uncleanness had not yet been given—no procedures were in place whereby a person could be cleansed. In the second year, the Israelites were required to be clean (Num 9:1-14). Also, it seems that the requirements for all men, including strangers, to be circumcised in order to eat the Passover were not given until **after** the first Passover (Ex 12:43-51). The children of Israel and a "mixed multitude" left Egypt in verses 37 and 38. The commands for circumcision and "not to break any of the lambs bones" were given only to Moses and Aaron—there was no "speak now in the hearing of the people" as in other chapters. The nature of the command

is apparently for the future: It talks about how Israelites should deal with servants and sojourners among them. In Egypt, **they** were the servants and sojourners. Joshua 5:5 indicates that all the Israelites who came out were circumcised, but this may have taken place after the Exodus—if Pharaoh would not give them three days off work to go and sacrifice (Ex 5:3-4), then he certainly would not have given them three days off work to heal from circumcision (Gen 34:24-25).

Why does it seem that the command not to break the lambs bones given after the first Passover? (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12.) It is slower and more difficult to serve a lamb without breaking any bones—it is much easier to chop some bones apart with a cleaver (which breaks them) than it is to carefully cut joints apart with a knife. This is quite different than the commands to eat the Passover in haste, with staff in hand and shoes on feet (Ex 12:11). Numerous Passover commands are repeated, but these commands are not. It appears they are replaced by the careful serving that would not break any bone—looking forward to our Savior whose blood would be shed, but who would not have any bones broken (Pslm 34:19-20, John 19:36).

At Mount Sinai, only a few months after the first Passover, the Eternal made significant changes to the Passover observance. Both Exodus 23:14-19 and 34:18-28 show that the Israelites were to appear three times a year before the Eternal. Verse 24 says: "For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year." The Israelites, in future Passovers, were told to leave their houses and go elsewhere for a sacrifice. This is very different from the first year's in-home sacrifice. The concept of appearing three times a year before the Eternal at His Feasts is explained further in Deuteronomy 16:1-17. In verses 5-6 we

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Begin Planning for 1997 Feast of Tabernacles

**Servants'
NEWS**

Vol. 3, No. 1 January/February 1997

Servants' News will again be hosting a Feast of Tabernacles this year, October 16-23. We have found a new location this year: **Burr Oak Resort in the Southeast corner of Ohio.** Burr Oak Resort and Conference Center is in one of the many resorts in the Ohio State Park system.

The location is Glouster, Ohio, 85 miles southeast of Columbus, Ohio and 35 miles northwest of Marietta, Ohio. The resort is situated in the 3,256 acre park in some of the State's most beautiful hill country and includes a 664 acre lake.

If you prefer an intimate and interactive type of Feast, with scenic and serene atmosphere, then this location may be for you. We will have daily meetings of reading scriptures with lively discussion, youth activities, inspiring worship music, a variety show, a women's lecture and plenty of space for fellowship. Our purpose is to provide a place so that the Eternal's people can "rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days" (Lev 23:40) and "that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always" (Deut 14:23). The environment of the state park is conducive to getting to know others, which leads to a greater capacity to love one another. Our Savior said that if we **have love for one another**, then by this we will be known to be his disciples.

Lodging facilities overlooking Burr Oak Lake:

Guest rooms: 1 double and 1 single bed, \$55 per night.

Cottages: 2 bdrm, beds for 6, has kitchen, \$80 per night.

Full service campground: 20 minutes away, \$10 per night.

You may make reservations by calling Burr Oak Lodge at 800-282-7275 and mentioning *Servants' News*. Our information booklet will list other motels in the area for as little as \$44 per night. Outdoor recreational activities include boating, fishing, swimming and miles of hiking trails. Also, an indoor swimming pool, basketball courts, tennis courts, and game room are available.

If you are interested in attending the 1997 Feast with us, please let us know. We will send information booklets as soon as they are available. If you have some current research and/or edifying information for everyone that you would like to present, please contact us.

Some other non-aligned Feast sites:

Cornerstone Publications (Jim Rector) has selected the Marina Bay Resort at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri for this year's Feast. Rooms are available at the resort and Knolls Condominiums. Rates: Studios, \$55 per night; Condos: 1-bdrm—\$65 per night, 2-bdrm—\$86 per night; 3-bdrm (Knolls only)—\$111 per night. All accommodations must be arranged through Marina Bay: 1-800-377-6274. For camping, call KOA: 1-800-562-7343.

United Christian Ministries (Ray Wooten) will again be in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, but in the Mills Auditorium. At least 10 motels are within easy walking distance at \$52 to \$100 per night. Workshops will be held and a live-band will attend for special music and entertainment. Call 888-985-9066.

A Church of God Ministry (Lon Lacey) has selected Albuquerque, New Mexico. See page 26 of December 1996 *Servants' News* for more details—over 100 people have already expressed interest. Call 505-822-8709.

Christian Educational Ministries (Ron Dart) will be at Kissimmee Civic Center in Southern Florida again this year with more music and workshops. Call 903-509-2999 for details.

Receipts Mailed

Receipt statements for all amounts received by *Servants' News* and Norman Edwards in 1996 were mailed in early February of this year. If you did not

receive one and you should have, please let us know. Financial information was mailed with the receipts. If you would like a copy of our financial information, please write to us.

Servants' News is published monthly except for combined March/April and September/October issues. Subscriptions are free to people interested in obeying their Creator as described in the Bible. We believe His law is the basis for living a life pleasing to Him and living at peace with our neighbors. We believe the holy spirit gives us the power to live such a life as long as we continually repent of our sins, accept the salvation provided through our Savior and strive to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has no financial ties with other organizations, but is financed by gifts and donations to our ministry. We have not received IRS tax exempt status, but the IRS allows some charitable deductions without such status (see IRS Publication 557, p. 16, col. 1).

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The *Scattered Brethren* hosted a conference on Biblical calendars at the Dallas, Texas Hilltop Inn, January 3-5, 1997. The conference was very pleasant and the home-cooked Mediterranean dinner on the Sabbath was especially enjoyable. Lawrence Maayeh and his wife, Merrellene did most of the work and certainly deserve most of the credit. About 70 people attended, but not everyone attended every session. There were seven speakers (one of whom was a last-minute volunteer) and many questions and comments from those attending.

A set of 11 tapes of the conference is available from Lawrence Maayeh, PO Box 860471, Plano, Texas 75086. Please send \$20 to cover duplicating and shipping costs. If you are unable to afford this, but would like to listen to the tapes, please write for the tapes anyway.

Space does not permit a detailed write-up of each presentation. Instead, we will summarize the method each speaker uses to begin their calendar's month and to begin the year—giving our own evaluation of the proof they used. If you are not already familiar with the terminology and issues regarding Biblical calendars, please ask for our free 10-page paper, *Biblical Calendar Basics*. You may write to the address on the back page, or simply call 517-543-5544 anytime.

Evaluation of proof is very important in calendar issues. Information about calendars is “here a little, there a little” in the Bible. The first calendar paper or tape you study may seem like “it has the Biblical calendar figured out.” When you study your second calendar system, things change. Some researchers draw opposite conclusions from the same verse. We have included a summary of the methods

we used in our evaluation of the systems presented at the conference:

When using a Bible verse as proof, it is very important to think about how that verse proves or supports the point in question:

- 1) Accepted Bible meaning—a point is proved by a meaning of a verse that most everyone agrees on.
- 2) Disputed Bible meaning—a point is proved by a meaning of a verse that is disputed—translators disagree. (This does not mean the conclusion is wrong, but be careful if an entire doctrine is based on one or more disputed interpretations.)

3) Inference—conclusions logically drawn from Biblical statements, but the Bible itself does not contain the statement. (Example from Acts 7:22: “Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians”—therefore, he was an expert in Egyptian astronomy and calendars. The conclusion is logical, but it is not in the Bible—in some societies only the religious hierarchy are allowed to learn about astronomy.)

4) Compliant verse—a verse that does not refute a certain point, but does not prove it either. (Example from Deut 16:1: “Observe the month of Abib...”—since *Abib* means “green ears” in Hebrew, does that mean that the month of *Abib* begins when there are green ears? If other scriptures prove this method of starting the year, this verse is compliant with them—it does not oppose them. But, the verse itself does not prove that Abib begins when there are green ears.)

5) Imagination—conclusions derived from a verse that really do not relate to the verse.

While all of the presenters claimed that their calendar was found in the Bible, they all made some references to non-Biblical history: either to show that their calendar system was practiced by righteous people, or to show that other calendar systems were used by “the pagans.” **When dealing with religious history or 2000-year old history, we have to be very careful. There is a wide variety of sources and many do not agree with each other.**

Evaluating historical proof is even more difficult than evaluating Biblical proof. We need to ask each one of these questions about any historical “fact”:

1) How close to the original event is it? The best sources are original writings made at the time and place where the historical event occurred. However, we have only a few stone, pottery, or other type of documents that have lasted so long. Often we must settle for copies or opinions written much later. Many history books give no original source at all for their conclusions.

2) Do the authors have a reason to be biased? Most human writers portray themselves and their friends better than they were, and their enemies worse than they really were. If a historian is paid by a government of a church, he is not likely to write too much against them.

3) Is it possible that the history has been altered—that it is not an accurate reflection of the people and time that it claims to be from?

4) Are there other opinions? We can find ancient stone writings that disagree with other equally ancient stone writings. The same problem applies to history books throughout the ages.

5) Is the history in agreement with the Bible?

6) Can the history be verified today? While this is impossible for much of history, it is possible for some calendar issues. Eclipses and other recorded astronomical events can be verified by modern astronomy. Some ancient calendar statements can be mathematically shown to be in error and therefore dismissed.

7) Are the conclusions drawn from the history correct? Many calendar researchers find a certain practice in use by “pagans” and immediately conclude that it cannot be correct. They fail to consider that “pagans” can borrow some practices of the true religion (2Kngs 17:28-29) or that some practices might be coincidental.

Let the Conference Begin

The meetings were opened Friday afternoon by Lawrence Maayeh. Next, **John Merritt**, founder of *Friends of the Sabbath*, spoke for about 20 minutes and explained the benefits of these types of conferences.

Norman Edwards (PO Box 220, Charlotte, Mich 48813) spoke next on the overview of calendars, and the Hebrew Calendar specifically. He encouraged all the brethren to be tolerant of others who do not see the calendar in the same way.

He asked for a show of hands of anyone who had kept the same calendar system (other than the Jewish one) since they were baptized. No hands went up. He asked if anyone was rebaptized after discovering their new calendar system. Again, no hands. The conclusion? We must believe that there are converted people using incorrect calendar systems.

Edwards also cautioned about mistaken claims that over-emphasize the importance of calendars: Some claim that they must keep the holy days (and the Sabbath) on the exact same days that the Father and Son in Heaven are keeping them. This is not sensible because holy days begin at sundown in each time zone—all people do not keep the holy days at the same time. Persons in New Zealand may completely finish celebrating a holy day before a person in Western Alaska begins celebrating it. These days were made for men to keep. The Eternal is involved in the doings of mankind, but no scripture says that He keeps these days.

Also, some calendar teachers unfairly compare the holy days to the Sabbath, saying that if we keep the wrong holy day, it is just the same as keeping Sunday instead of the Sabbath. **These issues are not at all comparable as the Bible gives a clear formula** that a 7-year old can understand for the Sabbath (work 6 days, rest 1 day), but leaves us with no clear instruction on how to handle the far more complex calculations of a solar-lunar calendar.

Edwards went on to explain that the Hebrew Calendar—the calendar used by nearly all Jews—is **not** a “perfect calendar that has been in use for thousands of years.” It is mathematically imperfect—each thousand years, it gets about four days later than the natural seasons of the year. Also, the Mishna, Talmud, and other Jewish history all record changes made to it. They show that at one time, new

months were begun by observing the first crescent of the moon. Now, they are mathematically calculated from the average conjunction of the Sun, Moon, and Earth. The present calendar rules require the start of the year to be adjusted (“postponed”) so that certain holy days do not fall on preparation days or the Sabbath. These restrictions may have made sense when many Jews were slaves and preparing food two days in advance was impossible, but they make less sense now. Of interest though, it is these postponement rules that delay the start of the month from the mean conjunction—and cause the Hebrew months to start at the first crescent moon about 20% of the time! If you believe the year should start with the first crescent moon, the Hebrew calendar would nearly always be wrong without the “postponements.”

Herb Solinsky (1911 Lansdown Ct, Carrollton, Texas 75010) took over three hours to present much information. He has studied the subject for 20 years and was knowledgeable on many calendar systems in addition to the one that he understands to be correct. He could have presented many more hours of relevant material if time was allotted.

He believes new months should be started with the first observable crescent moon in Jerusalem, and that the year should begin with the first new moon after the spring equinox. This means that he recognizes the beginning of the month usually 1 or 2 days later than the Hebrew calendar. In about 4 years out of 100, he believes that the Hebrew Calendar will be off by a month. About 20% of the time, Solinsky’s dates agree with the Hebrew calendar.

Solinsky showed how the Hebrew word for new moon, *chodesh*, is from a root that means “to renew”—hence the month starts with a renewed moon. He

showed from Nehemiah where they were keeping the holy days correctly, yet the Babylonian month names are used.

His historical material was excellent. He had eclipse records and other primarily historical sources showing when the year began—using the same calendar that Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were using. From 499 to 400 BC, the beginning month of the year was the first new moon after the equinox. He had the testimony of Philo, a first-century Jew, who clearly stated that the month began with the first observable crescent and encouraged people to go to Jerusalem to keep the feasts.

This would have been the calendar by which our Savior kept the Feasts. We can be relatively sure that Philo’s writings were not altered to conform to later Jewish calendar theory because they have been maintained by Christians, not Jews.

Solinsky had in-depth information showing how it was possible for people to know the precise day of the spring equinox without modern math or science. (Some people actually advocate calendar systems today that no one would have been able to calculate years ago). He believes that the Israelites kept the calendar based on actual sightings of the moon, but he uses a sophisticated computer program to predict when the first crescent would be observable from Jerusalem. He admits that his calculated methods may deviate from actual observation in a small percentage of cases where a small crescent moon is visible for only a short time. He would accept actual sightings from Jerusalem instead of his calculations in those instances. Solinsky further agreed that he would accept a calendar determined by a new Jewish Sanhedrin if it was based on the principles he understands to be true. (During the last year, there has been serious talk among large Jewish groups of reconvening a Sanhedrin to deal with calendar and other issues.)

James Russell (PO Box 2109, Corona, Calif. 91718) explained the calendar system he uses. Russell believes the year should begin with the month closest to the spring equinox. He believes the months begin at the calculated **true astronomical conjunction** (when the Earth, Moon, and Sun are completely in line). This system will usually start the month one or two days before the Hebrew Calendar and fairly frequently starts the year a whole month before the Hebrew calendar.

The **true astronomical conjunction**

IMPORTANT CALENDAR CONCEPTS

Month: In most Biblical calendar systems, the period of time that the moon revolves around the earth. Systems differ in deciding what phase of the moon should begin the month.

Year: There are about 12.38 lunar months in a year, so some years have 12 months and some 13. Systems differ in deciding when to start a new year.

Observed Calendar: One determined by physically sighting the heavenly bodies (e.g. the new month begins when the new moon is seen). Systems may specify sightings to be made by each individual, each congregation or a central authority. Heavy cloud layers can change the start of months or years.

Calculated or Fixed Calendar: One based on calculations of the positions of heavenly bodies. Most calendar calculations are too complex for the average person, but such calculations can be written down so others can use them.

is different from the mean (average) conjunction used by the Hebrew calendar. In reality, the moon's orbit is not round and is not in exactly the same plane as the Earth's orbit around the sun. The true conjunction calculations include all of these motions—they are much more complex but possible with modern computers. The Hebrew calendar mean conjunction assumes that the the Moon circles the Earth every 29.530594 days.

Russell admitted that the true conjunction calculations are probably beyond the capabilities of the ancients. If the calendar as he understands it has been historically kept, it had to be done by observation or approximation. Since there are one, two or three days between the time when the last crescent is visible and the first crescent is visible, there is no reliable way for ancients to know which day was the "true conjunction" until the first crescent appeared—after the conjunction was already past! It is inconceivable that the Israelites regularly celebrated "New Moons" if they could not determine them until afterward. Russell mentioned the phenomenon of "Earth shine"—the possibility of seeing the dark moon from light reflected upon it by the Earth. Whether or not this is possible was debated, but no one claimed that this was a reliable way to sight the moon every month—the slightest amount of clouds or dust in the air would certainly obscure any chance of seeing the moon by Earthshine.

Russell's scriptural basis for using a dark moon to begin the month was based on accidentally reading the wrong definition of a word in confusing footnotes of the Brown, Driver & Briggs Lexicon—an error Solinsky later pointed out to him. Also, he used many analogies showing how seeds begin their life in the ground in darkness, a chicken begins its life in darkness in a shell, and a baby begins its life in the womb in darkness. This sounds good, but if you think about it, these things are not considered "born" and the length of their life is not counted until they emerge and see their first light. These analogies seem like they could also be used to prove that we should use a first crescent moon to begin the month. Nevertheless, these are only analogies—not Biblical evidence.

Much of Russell's presentation was about the "evils" of the Jewish calendar, postponements and keeping the "wrong days." He made statements like: "if we can postpone the holy days, can we postpone the Sabbath?" We would like to raise

this question: Is postponing holy days any more wrong than holding them early? If the Eternal really intended for us to start the month with a crescent moon, then Russell's system will always be keeping the "wrong days" because the true conjunction is always at least one day before the first visible crescent.

James Russell presented many other scriptural points, but most were inferences or disputed interpretations. He linked crescent moons to paganism, but had little historical evidence that ancient Israel or the New Testament church ever kept (or could possibly keep) the calendar as he keeps it today.

Rick Eckert (PO Box 305, Orange Beach, Ala 36561) presented a calendar system in which the new year was based on the progress of the barley harvest. In addition, he believes that the month should begin when the moon is full, but he did not have time to present detailed information on this subject. Using the full moon means that all holy days will be kept about two weeks differently from most other calendar systems. Whether the holy days are kept two weeks earlier or two weeks later depends on the barley harvest each year. Eckert and others who use a similar system have actually planted barley to determine when to start their year.

Eckert spent a lot of time emphasizing the "paganism" associated with other calendar systems. He went as far as quoting an author who claimed three different calendar systems were used in the Bible (two of which were wrong). However, this is an extremely disputed viewpoint and all the scriptures used for proving it all fall into the categories of "inference, compliant statements, or imagination." Eckert believed that the mention of six Babylonian month names in Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah was not a proof that the Babylonian calendar was equivalent to the Biblical calendar at that time. He also cited references to the "wood offering" (Neh 10:34, 13:31) as proof that the Jews were following unbiblical Babylonian religious practices. (Actually, Leviticus 6:12 commands the Levites to use wood for the offering and other translations show that is the meaning of the Hebrew in Nehemiah: "wood for the offerings"—Moffatt, "supply of wood"—NAS.)

He did bring out some heart-warming lessons that could be learned when families observe the moon and barley together. However, he did not have a good explanation for what people should do who live in

cities or in climates where barley does not grow. He said they could call someone else who was growing barley, but that leaves us with the very real situation that a person could be keeping the holy days a month differently depending on whether they decided to call a friend 100 miles north or a friend 100 miles south.

The primary scripture Eckert uses to begin the month with a full moon is Psalm 81:3 which literally says "Blow the trumpet in the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day." Since there is no "and" in the Hebrew, Eckert and others conclude that it means the new and full moons are the same. However, this same syntax is found in Psalm 13:2, and other verses where it clearly does not imply equivalent items. Also, he pointed to Ezekiel 46:1-2 which shows that the East gate of Jerusalem will be opened on the Sabbath and the New Moon. He was correct in stating that the full moon can be observed just after sunset in the East but first crescents are observed in the West. However, he appears to be using a bit of imagination to use this scripture as proof that the full moon starts the month. We are specifically commanded not to worship the sun, moon and stars (Deut 4:19), and there is no command whatever to observe heavenly bodies as a part of a worship service. People would have had to know it was a new moon before they came to the service, otherwise they would not be at the service. The next few verses show the purpose of the gate being open on both the new moon and Sabbath was to let certain people into the service, not to observe the moon.

We would like to point out that Rick Eckert was a kind and pleasant man, easy to listen to, and several times during his talk he acknowledged that there might be other valid calendar ideas and that he had learned many new things at the conference.

Michael Turner (PO Box 860471, Plano, Texas 75086) explained a system that used the first observable crescent to start the month. This part of his system is very similar to the one explained by Solinsky. **However, he determines the start of the year in a completely different manner.** He begins the year when the moon can be sighted in the constellation Taurus. This approach often begins the year a month later than the Hebrew Calendar. Due to the phenomenon known as the "precession of the equinoxes", this method causes the calendar to become

unsynchronized with the Earth's seasons a little more than one day every thousand years.

We felt the biggest benefit of Turner's presentation was the wealth of information he provided about Bible references to the stars and astronomy. Many people assume that any mention of stars or signs of the zodiac are part of astrology and false religion. They are unaware of scriptures like Job 9:9: "He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south." Turner did a convincing job of showing that the Eternal created the constellations, and then later false religions exploited them for their own use.

People who use the equinox to start their year usually determine the day of the equinox by putting a fixed stick in the ground and marking the end of its shadow each day at noon. Turner found links between these "sun sticks" and "Pagan" obelisks and sun-worship. He prefers starting the year by looking up at the sun, rather than down at a "sun stick." While the links to pagan worship may exist in some cases, the Eternal's people should not be prevented from calculating the equinoxes just because others have made that process into a false religious event. The same argument is used by many to dismiss any kind of star observance—it is linked to astrology. Genesis 1:14 tells us that the sun would be used to determine seasons, days and years, so we should not be afraid to use it for that purpose.

We do have to credit Turner with developing a calendar system that would be observable in essentially the same manner all over the Earth. He even pointed out some interesting prophetic implications: "Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1). Some people believe that this refers to a time when both the sun and moon are visible in the constellation Virgo (the virgin). With Turner's calendar system, this event will occur on a holy day. **The problem with his system is that there are no clear scriptures or history that tell us to use it.** Josephus makes a reference to the Israelites leaving Egypt when the "Sun was in Aries" (a constellation), but he does not say that was how they determined the start of the year—nor does he mention the "moon in Taurus".

Michael Turner was very open to other calendar ideas and intended to keep on studying them.

Vendyl Jones (PO Box 120366, Arlington, TX 76012) spent some time talking about a solar calendar based on 52 weeks of 7 days (364 days) with a leap-day at the Spring Feast and an extra day every fourth year at the Fall feast (leap year). He claims there are exactly twelve months in each year with no correlation between the month and the cycle of the moon. He was met by such a barrage of questions from the audience that he was not really able to finish explaining the calendar.

Nevertheless, he seemed quite happy to take the time to talk about some of the books he had available, his Torah study classes, and current projects.

We included a brief article about Vendyl Jones on page 17 of the June 1996 *Servants' News*. Jones is a man of great controversy—some people consider him the world's greatest archeologist, others a fraud. We have not been able to personally evaluate his work, but do find that we learn something from everyone. He pointed out that the fourth Hebrew word in the Bible is not translated—does not even have a Strong's number—yet is in every manuscript. I easily confirmed this in my inter-linear. It says: "in-the-beginning created God *et*". The Hebrew word *et* is composed of aleph and tav, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This word is more like an acronym, saying that "in the beginning God created everything from A to Z."

Alva Nelms was not a scheduled speaker, but during an extended panel discussion session she asked if she could present her understanding of the calendar and was given time to do so. Most everyone wanted to hear it and Lawrence Maayeh permitted her to do so. She presented her opinions very well, though we had to take great exception to some of them. She started with a list of requirements that she thought the Eternal's calendar should satisfy. Two points were "Must be simple enough for a shepherd to understand" and "Must not have fragmented time periods." We took exception to that because it is not in the Bible nor is it verified by history. The Eternal could have set the Earth and Moon in perfectly circular and flat orbits, made their periods of revolution and rotation exact multiples of each other, and done many other things to simplify calendar calculations. But He did not—He left it rather complicated.

Nelms advocated using the last visible crescent for starting a month. It is seen just before sunset, rather than just before

sunrise. This gives people an extra twelve hours to prepare for the next day which will be the new moon. The main problem with this is that you cannot really be sure that you are seeing the last visible crescent—it can look very small, but you may see a very tiny part of it the next day. So with this method, sometimes you will not know when the "new moon" is until twelve hours **after** it has occurred. Nelms used a few other problem-arguments such as "the reason the Bible does not contain a description of what a 'new moon' looks like is because it is a dark moon and there is nothing to see." The Hebrew language has words that mean "nothing" and "dark," but the Eternal chose not to give any description at all.

What Calendar Do We Use Now?

In the many disputes about the exact timing of months and years, one important calendar consideration is sometimes overlooked: **Was the calendar to be centrally proclaimed, or are nations, congregations, or individuals to determine it for themselves?** We can guess all day about what the Eternal might have wanted after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, but we can **know** how it was done when the temple stood. Leviticus 16:29-34 clearly states that the high priest was to perform the Day of Atonement ceremony **once** each year. If Israelites each observed the calendar individually, they would occasionally be a day or a month off. Some will claim that Israel was such a small country that there would be no significant variation in moon observation, but both science and actual practice confirm otherwise. To prove it, ask a friend who lives 50 to 100 miles away to write down each month, the days he sees the first crescent, the full moon, and the last crescent for a full year. Keep similar records yourself and see if your records disagree. Clouds, elevation, distance and even human forgetfulness can cause you to have different results.

The year began when the priests said it did, because they were the ones proclaiming the holy days and offering the required sacrifices. If a person in ancient Israel observed the calendar correctly when the priests were wrong, would he be able to have the holy day ceremonies performed for him according to his calendar observation? No, the law contained no such provision. The days were to be proclaimed, and the people were to assemble (Lev 23:2.4.37). This does not mean that the

priests were dictators or some kind of hierarchical rulers. Their authority was limited to certain temple and judgmental functions, one of which was blowing the trumpets to proclaim the days:

The sons of Aaron, **the priests, shall blow the trumpets;** and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.... Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and **at the beginning of your months,** you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God (Num10:8,10).

Nearly everyone who came to the conference seemed willing to keep whatever calendar system was necessary to please their Creator. That is a wonderful attitude! Is the Eternal testing us to see how many hundreds or thousands of hours we are willing to pour into calendar research—or is he interested in how we are going to cooperate with each other? Cannot all of those who attended this conference, listened to its tapes, or read related articles be confident in the day of judgment that we will be able to say that we did what we could to find the truth, but the truth was simply not yet clearly revealed.

The main purpose for the holy days that we see in scripture are the offering of sacrifices, the joyous assembling of the brethren, and the praise of our Father. Our Savior fulfilled the sacrifice part, but the latter two aspects continue. It is hard for the Body of Christ to come together on the holy days if they are using a dozen or more different calendars. **The priests had the authority to blow the trumpets to proclaim the days when the temple was standing. Who has that authority today?** We can find no Biblical evidence or history showing that calendar authority ever existed in the true church. Yet, we find millions of Jews spread around the world keeping an imperfect calendar, yet all assembling together on the same days.

In our estimation, the main problem among the Jews today is much the same as it is among Christians: they do not live by the little bit of scripture that they know, and they have little interest in learning more. **Their main problem is not the keeping of holy days at the wrong time. The Bible tells us that the Eternal says "I hate your feast days", but in almost**

every case there is a description of what the people are doing that He hates. There is no scripture that specifically says the Eternal hates these Feasts because they are being kept on the wrong day. To the contrary, we find one of the greatest Passovers in the Bible kept by Hezekiah one month late and twice as long as the Eternal commanded (2Chr 30:2,23).

Should we reject everything the Jews teach because of their many sins? What do we do about teaching from Christian or even modern-day Sabbath-keeping leaders who have sinned? Do we reject it all or do we pick what is good? The Old Testament was maintained for thousands of years by sinning Jewish scribes—not by spirit-filled believers. Minor errors and imperfections have entered the manuscripts, but all that we need to be saved and to grow is there. Is it difficult to believe that the Eternal may have allowed His calendar be maintained by the same people in a similar fashion? **The Hebrew calendar now has error, but it is sufficient for Jews and Christians alike to meet together for the holy days and learn the essential lessons from them.**

If we do not know exactly how the Eternal intended for the calendar to be kept, **is it better for us to keep our own probably-wrong calendar with only a few brethren, or to keep the Jewish probably-wrong calendar that the majority of other brethren keep?**

Of all the research at the conference, Herb Solinsky's seemed by far the most thorough to us. We think it is possible that Herb Solinsky's research accurately reflects the Biblical calendar—that it is not in conflict with any scriptures or reliable history. We need to study it more before we can make up our own mind. Unfortunately, it is not available in an easy-to-read format. Solinsky has hundreds of pages of research and notes that he is compiling, but it will be some time before the book he plans to write is ready. We will notify *Servants' News* readers when it is available.

Obviously, each believer must live by what they are convicted of (Rom 14:23). However, we all should not let anyone scare us into believing that we will be cursed for keeping "the wrong holy days" when we do not have a clear, Biblical understanding of what are the "right days."

The Edwards do not plan to depart from the Jewish calendar until all of the

following take place:

1) We are completely convinced that another system is the one that the Eternal has intended and it is His will that believers use that system.

2) An inexpensive book is written explaining the new calendar so the average person can understand it and also understand why all other calendar systems are not correct. Without such a writing, it will be difficult to teach the new system to a large number of people.

3) An effort is made to contact a majority of holy-day-keeping groups and ask them to consider the new calendar system.. It would be a mistake to try to force anyone to keep certain days, but if a new calendar is obviously right, at least some other spirit-led, open-minded, holy-day-keeping people should be able to understand it and agree with it.

When Israel was a single nation, any calendar system would work—even an observed one—as long as it was communicated to everyone in the country. Making an advance reservation at an inn for two days before Atonement was not a problem—the inn-keeper would know exactly when Atonement was. Since the Jews and other holy-day-keepers live mixed among other cultures, is it possible that the well-publicized fixed Hebrew calendar is an act of the Eternal's mercy? ("Well publicized" means that there have been Jews in nearly every country keeping it.) It gives us a unified way to keep the holy days without the need for continual contact with a central Jewish or Christian hierarchy. **Throughout history, most people did not possess enough mathematical skills to calculate any fixed calendar system by themselves.** But observed calendars make the precise scheduling of future dates impossible. With the fixed Hebrew calendar, a person can make an advance hotel reservation for two days before Atonement by asking for "October 9th". It is nearly impossible to **organize** a Feast in a large facility if you cannot tell its manager what day the Feast will begin.

We hope this article will encourage everyone to study calendar systems and to make a decision based on their understanding of the scriptures and available history. *Servants' News* will continue to list Feast sites for all calendar systems. We hope brethren will continue to regard each other as brethren no matter what calendar system they use.

—Norman S. Edwards



News from Local Congregations



Spring Feast Get-Together

Come to the Lake of the Ozarks for fellowship and learning during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. A get-together will be held Friday evening, April 25 to Monday evening, April 28 (the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Hebrew calendar). Everyone is invited. The purposes are to provide fellowship, express ideas, hear others' ideas, create new friendships, and take a small vacation. Currently planned presenters include Ray Daly, Norman Edwards, John Merritt, Dannel Roberts, John Sash. Anyone else interested in making a short presentation is welcome to do so.

The get-together will be held at the State Park Campground. The main hall is a fully heated stone and wood structure that will seat 150 people. It has fully equipped restaurant-style kitchen and all necessary eating utensils. There are about 25 unheated rustic cabins spread out on a wooded peninsula around the lake. Each cabin has four twin beds with 3" mattresses—bring your own linens or sleeping bag. There are modern bathrooms with showers within easy walking distance. The best thing, **the cost is only \$1 per day per person.**

If "roughing-it" does not appeal to you, there are heated cabins only about a mile away for \$30 to \$40 per night. A newer campground, about 3 miles away, has hook-ups for RV's. Eight miles away, there are a great variety of motels (and numerous restaurants and commercial attractions).

There is no fee for attending the get-together. Everyone is welcome to share the hiking trails, sand volleyball court, boat docks, etc. If you intend to come, please contact the Eldon, Missouri congregation so they can plan—fifty people are already planning to come. They would like to know:

- 1) The dates you plan to be there.
- 2) The number of adults and children who will be coming with you.
- 3) The number of cabins you need.

4) Your interest in participating in communal meals at the central lodge. That would include doing your share of paying, preparing, eating and cleaning up. (You can participate in shared meals, even though you may choose to stay in a motel. Restaurants are 8 miles away).

For more information contact:

John and Debbie Sash
RR 3 Box 327
Eldon, Missouri, 65026
573-392-1673

LRCOG Directory—2nd Edition

The second edition of the Living Room Church of God Directory (LRCOG Directory) is now available. The new directory has 65 entries. Copies are available from *Servants' News* or directly from the directory producers. If you would like a copy or would like to list your group in the directory, please contact: Robert Bodkin, 11913-93rd NE #203, Kirkland, WA 98034.

So. California Home Fellowship

Ray Wooten, Pastor of the United Church of God, Birmingham and founder of United Christian Ministries will be speaking at special Southern California Home Fellowship services. They will be held at the Fullerton Day's Inn on March 28th, 7:30 PM, and March 29th, 10:30 AM and 2:30 PM. Call Dale and Rosemary Stogner for more details: 714-730-3561.

Servants' News on the Web

Most *Servants' News* issues and some of our literature is now available on the worldwide web. Internet users can access the following URL:
<http://www.best.com/~oasis7/sn/snews.htm>

UCG General Conference

The *United Church of God, An International Association* is scheduled to hold its General Conference of Elders (over

400 paid and unpaid ministers) March 8-11 in Louisville, Kentucky. The UCG-AIA does not have funds to pay for ministers to travel this year, so the men must find their own way. This is in great contrast to last year when over \$700,000 was spent bringing all ministers and wives to the conference.

Finances will be a big item on the agenda. The UCG was \$3 million over budget for 1996, mostly due to increased office staff salaries, ministers salaries, additional benefits for salaried people and retirement paid to former WCG ministers. It has become clear that there may not be enough money to do any significant Gospel-preaching—and maybe not enough money to pay the ministry. Plans to save money by cutting salaries or by laying off ministers will also be discussed. Ministers will certainly ask for fulfillment of the Indianapolis conference promise to reveal the 5 highest executive salaries.

How to preach the Gospel will be another issue. In visits to local church areas, David Hulme, UCG-AIA president, has clearly stated that he would prefer all telecasts and literature come from UCG headquarters—local congregations should not work independently. The last issue of the In-Transition newspaper contained an excellent article on a successful local television Gospel preaching effort that was halted by UCG headquarters until an appropriate "media policy" could be put into effect. Some members were amazed that the UCG spent \$93,000 on a trip to Israel to shoot video footage without a "media policy" or any place to air the program.

The issue of governance will be raised: what recourse do fired ministers and disfellowshipped members have? Should there be more central or local control? Hulme has stated that he and his staff are entrusted with all administrative decisions. It is the job of the Council of Elders to make policies, but in the absence of such policies, Hulme's decisions stand. One such issue was recent changes to tithing doctrines. Some asked why this doctrinal change was not considered by the whole conference as required by the constitution. The answer? They decided

it was not a "doctrinal change" but an "administrative change". Will all future changes be classified "administrative"?

Continue Ambassador University?

Ambassador University in Big Sandy, Texas announced that they will close down their campus and offer it for sale after the completion of the Spring 1997 semester. The reasons given were essentially financial. AU was dependent on a continual subsidy from the Worldwide Church of God, which that organization is no longer able to afford. This is the latest in a series of financial conservation measures, which included the selling of the youth magazine, charging for the Plain Truth magazine, reductions in ministry and headquarters staff, and encouraging members to again tithe.

We have received letters from two groups, and have heard of others, interested in attempting to continue Ambassador University. Some groups want to use legal means to get control of the assets of AU under the theory that the land was donated for a college and the buildings were built with tithe money dedicated for that purpose. Other groups want to get people to pledge money to purchase the property.

The *Servants' News* staff is happy to see people taking initiative and trying to provide a place where young people can get a education in a Sabbatarian environment. However, we believe that efforts to raise money to legally gain control of AU or to buy it will be a waste of time and money that could be better used to preach the Gospel or help others in a positive way.

While it is unfortunate that millions of dollars in assets are not being used for the purpose that the donors intended, we must realize that most brethren gave their money on the basis that they were "tithing to God" and that once the church organization had the money, they could do whatever they wanted with it. Even when contributions were given to the building fund, the organizations rarely ever gave any written promise as to exactly what the money would be used for and for how long. Hopefully, brethren will learn from this mistake and not repeat it. Today, most brethren realize that they have a choice as to which organization they will give in order to help do the Eternal's work.

Will not the Eternal hold all of us accountable for whether we give to a fruitful organization or to one that bears little fruit? How can brethren decide to whom they should give unless the organization provides detailed information on what they are doing with their money? (For a Biblical study of giving and tithing, please ask for our paper: *How Do We Give to the Eternal?*)

For those hoping to raise money to buy AU, we would like you to consider reality. How well have other "joint ventures" among the various "Church of God" groups worked? Most of these groups **discourage** members from attending meetings of inter-Sabbatarian organizations like *Friends of the Sabbath*. Most do not want their members to go to any combined Sabbath service, or even a picnic with other Sabbatarian congregations. If multiple organizations supported AU in the future, would men from each organization take turns conducting services, or would the campus have separate Sabbath services for each church organization? Would students be allowed to date students from other church organizations?

While these may seem like petty questions, they are real ones that most organizations cannot answer. And if these organizations cannot cooperate on these issues in which little money is involved, how can they cooperate on something that involves millions of dollars? Nearly all of the WCG-splinter groups are in financial trouble right now—none can contribute in a big way to a college. Even if they had the money, how would they decide what was each group's fair share? Will they happily allow members to give a substantial portion of their tithes or offerings directly to the college? Ask their headquarters if you do not know.

For young people seeking a college education, we gave some recommendations on page 10 of the July 1996 *Servants' News*. For individuals seeking Bible education, there are a number of good tape ministries available for little expense. For class-room style courses with videos and workbooks, we recommend the *International Biblical Learning Center* (IBLC). They are less than one year old, but already have about a dozen courses taught primarily by former Ambassador College teachers. They have over 200 students and are

capable of serving many more. Their annual budget is about one hundredth of the size of Ambassador University. The IBLC was able to start because a few individuals committed themselves to seeing it through. However, if present growth in students and contributors continues, it will be self-sufficient in two or three years. Their biggest advantage is that they can serve a great number of Sabbath-keeping brethren—both college students and older generations. You may receive a free catalog by writing:

International Biblical Learning Center
7 Berean Way, Hawkins, Texas 75765
Email: IBLC@AOL.COM

Sabbath Campers Fellowship

The Sabbath Campers' Fellowship desires to act as a hand that reaches across all barriers of men and organizations and doctrinal differences to celebrate the things that we share in common—faith in God, obedience to Him and the Sabbath—to name a few. We encourage tolerance, godly love and peace allowing God's Holy Spirit to join us as brethren.

Once again, we are preparing to make plans for the 1997 Sabbath Campers' Fellowship campouts. There was tremendous interest expressed in 1996 and participation from brethren in other areas of the United States.

We hope that many brethren, whether independent or affiliated with an organization will feel free to participate! The casual and informal atmosphere of the campground is an excellent place to fellowship and show love one to another.

If you do not wish to camp overnight, but would like to join us for Sabbath services and/or fellowship, please feel free to come on any of the scheduled camp days.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, we will keep you informed about all of our campouts.

—Al and Jeanne Raines
5415 Torrey Rd., Flint, Michigan 48507-3811 Tel: 810-232-2288, Fax: 810-232-5562, E-mail: weeder@kode.net

Songs for Feast Hymnal

Rita Rector is putting together a hymnal for the 1997 Feast of Tabernacles. She would like to make this hymnal available to any of the

groups that would be interested in using it—each group could make their own copies. Anyone wishing to submit songs for the hymnal is encouraged to do so. There must not be any copyright restrictions on the songs: personally composed music and old, out-of-copyright favorites are the most likely candidates. Please contact Rita at: 3802 Olive St., Texarkana, TX 75503, 903-792-1352.

Death of a Friend

Elinor Fransson, 56, of Tonasket, Washington, died suddenly of a brain aneurism on Feb. 15, 1997. During the last several months, she had willingly volunteered her time and energy proofreading *Servants' News*. She had previous journalism experience with a newspaper in Olympia, Washington, and proved to be a great help to us. The Franssons moved from Alaska a little over a year ago and attended the United Church of God Feast site in Hawaii last October. In November 1996, she used the *Servants' News* "scattered brethren contact" facility to reach out to other brethren in her area (see Sept-Oct 1996 issue). Survivors include her husband, Lennart, four adult children, three adult step-children, and 12 grandchildren. *Servants' News* extends gratitude and sincerest regards to the family of Elinor Fransson, and respectfully agree with her husband's encouraging remark that "she was a super-woman, but her race is over—I guess the rest of us still have things to learn."

PCG Reprints *Mystery of the Ages*

In the February 1997 Philadelphia Trumpet magazine, Philadelphia Church of God founder Gerald Flurry announced that they would be giving away free copies of Herbert Armstrong's last book, *Mystery of the Ages*—though the Worldwide Church of God is suing him for copyright violation. Flurry feels the first seven years of his mission were to warn the church through his book *Malachi's Message*. He now believes he must preach the Gospel to the world by distributing Armstrong's book "to the largest audience possible."

The PCG now has over 5000 members, 70 TV stations airing his program, and has spent over \$12 million on air time. We are happy to see Mr. Flurry's decision to begin preaching the Gospel to the world at large. We do not agree with his overemphasis on

Herbert Armstrong or his organizational structure, and believe the PCG could do a better job using their own or other freely available material. However, there have been a number of recent cases where people have been introduced to Bible truth from hierarchical organizations, then upon further Bible study decided to attend with a non-hierarchical Sabbath-keeping group.

Friends of the Sabbath, Australia

In April 1997, the *Friends Of The Sabbath* conference series is coming to Australia! For those of you who already know and value these conferences, the details are at the end of this article. For the others, a short history to give a little background.

In July 1996, the first ever such conference came to Australia. The conferences are organised by the *Friends Of The Sabbath* which presents speakers on a topic common to all. *Friends Of The Sabbath* is an organisation dedicated to promoting "the Sabbath day as a sign to all Christians, to teach its holiness and to bring about mutual understanding and harmony between Sabbatarian Churches, groups and fellowships." They have a goal of fostering understanding and building bridges between the various Sabbath-keeping denominations. The organisation specifically states that it is **not** to be a church, but to remain a neutral organisation sharing the fellowship of other Sabbath-keepers. It is not controlled by any church, nor is it exclusive in its approach to speakers.

This first conference was a milestone in many ways. It was the first interdenominational conference of Sabbath-keepers in Australian history. It was also the first *Friends Of The Sabbath* conference held outside the USA.

Many Sabbath-keepers have been feeling the isolation and perhaps a level of persecution in a world without the truth of God's Sabbath Day. Some have felt that they alone are keeping this commandment of God. For Australia this feeling was smashed by this first conference. Some attended with a skeptical attitude, but almost everyone there possessed a willingness to learn more about something they all felt was precious—God's Sabbath Day. I doubt that anyone left agreeing with every speaker. If nothing else, this is a healthy indication of the way everyone listened—actively comparing and con-

trasting what they were listening to with the understanding they already possessed.

Many remarked on the high standard of scholarship demonstrated by most of the speakers. Most left with their knowledge increased, as well as an upsurge in devotion to and enthusiasm for God's Sabbath. This flowed over in an increased devotion to God's way in general—and even the (very few) critics would have to agree that this is a valuable addition to any congregation.

The first conference focused on the Sabbath day itself covering many aspects—from history to the many spiritual lessons it holds. The coming conference will also look at the Sabbath, but it will also address other issues, topics like the annual Holy Days, the Kingdom of God or prophecy. However, all speakers will be aware of the interdenominational character of the congregation they will be addressing, so it is unlikely that they will be willing to hurt instead of help any others' spiritual growth.

DETAILS FOR THIS YEAR:

Keynote Speakers:

Dr Bryan Ball, President of the South Pacific Division of the SDA Church and author of "The English Connection" and "The Seventh Day Men".

Ron Dart independent Church of God evangelist, presenter on the "Born to Win" radio program, and Director of Christian Educational Ministries based in the USA.

Melvin Rhodes, founder of Anchor Magazine, a ministry for recovering homosexuals and pastor of United Church of God—AIA congregations in Lansing & Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

A video on the East European Sabbatarians by Victor Kubik, member of the Council of Elders, United Church of God (an International Association).

Dates/details: **Brisbane:** 5-6 April, (07) 3344 5283; **Sydney:** 12-13 April, (02) 9457 8428; **Melbourne:** 19-20 April, (03) 9878 9166.

You may also write to one of these addresses if you are interested in attending: Friends of the Sabbath, Australia, GPO Box 864, Sydney 2001 or PO Box 7, Beerburum, QLD 4517.

Donations are gratefully received. Please make any cheques out to: Friends of the Sabbath, Australia, GPO Box 864, Sydney 2001.

—Peter King 

QUESTIONS REGARDING: Common Law Marriage

Servants' News received this letter raising several good questions regarding the December, 1996 issue article, "Marriage & Divorce".

January 23, 1997

Norm,

I read your article discussing why we should return to marriage without state license, since no biblical mandate can be found to support this practice. Well,,, I could write a book on this, but I want to get this letter faxed today.

1) Since our society is set up giving legal approval, and often nonapproval, to "common law" type marriages, in instances such as medical, social security, military benefits, pensions etc., it would be a disservice to one's spouse (which usually disadvantages the woman) to even suggest today that a woman be put in such a circumstance. For example, a friend of mine has lived with a man for the past 23 years. He had been in the military, and was drawing a hefty monetary benefit due to having a service-connected injury. He just died January 3, 1997. Since the couple was not legally married, and our military services do not accept common law marriages as legal marriages, guess how much of that military pension my friend is going to receive? You guessed it! A goose egg \$00000. Since the man is biblically admonished to provide for his wife, in many cases due to the society in which we live, if there is no legal marriage, there will be no provision in case of his demise. When she could have been provided for by his pension, she will now have to work indefinitely to support herself, which will be at "minimum wage." Would you want to leave a wife in this position? (If those who really feel this way are really serious, then they should get a divorce, and re-commit to one another without the civil contract!)

My question is: Why should a "believer" opt out of providing for his wife in his circumstances, wherein the heathen neighbor who is legally married, under the same conditions as related above, would leave his wife well provided for receiving a \$2500.00+ pension per month. Paul gives us an example how we can use the law to our advantage, in which case a "legal" marriage would do, in the condi-

tions listed above.

RESPONSE: No, The November 1996 *Servants' News* marriage article was not suggesting that men have no civil responsibility to their wives. The article was suggesting that individuals write their own marriage agreement rather than relying on the State to bind (and perhaps later to unbind) their marriage.

There are certainly many legal issues to look into, such as property ownership, survivor's benefits and child custody. The simplest thing for a couple to do is to obtain a state marriage license in addition to their agreement. However, states do not always do a very fair job of administering these things either. Also, laws vary greatly from state to state.

We have not surveyed the laws of every state, but we have heard of a few cases where individuals have used a contract for marriage and the courts have considered it a legal marriage—the same as if a license were obtained. There are other ways to achieve a "common law marriage" than just living together for a length of time. Some of these methods will give a wife as good or even better protection if her husband divorces her. We feel the best solution is for the couple to think out what should happen if they divorce. The courts generally uphold prenuptial (pre-marriage) agreements if they determine that both parties understood what they were signing. A marriage contract can be legally recorded and serve as a prenuptial agreement. If a woman or man finds their prospective mate unwilling to make written commitments about financial matters before marriage, they really need to think about whether they want to marry this person.

One of the biggest problems marriages face today is the lack of planning for economic and legal realities on the part of both husbands and wives. We do not have the time or experience to investigate all of the marriage, inheritance, pension, and other related laws in all 50 states. But people who are getting married should know something about the laws that affect them.

LETTER CONTINUES:

2). While we are revisiting these marriage laws, let's say that the man "pay" for his bride with hard cash or 7 years of

labor (adding that amount up, would total to quite a sum!!)

RESPONSE: Actually, paying a bride price is not a bad idea, though it cannot be done today unless both husband and wife agree to it. Jacob worked seven years each for two wives, but that seems rather high. Fifty shekels seems to be a more common bride price (Deut 22:29). There are a number of advantages to the bride-price system.

a) In the Old Testament, women essentially became part of their husband's family—they were counted as part of the husband's tribe. Sons were responsible for taking care of their elderly parents. If a couple had mostly daughters, receiving the bride-price for each one would help take care of them in their later years.

b) A bride would be assured that her husband was capable of supporting a family. If the man earns enough to save money for the bride price, then he should be earning enough to support a family after the marriage. Quick marriages of financially irresponsible men would be eliminated.

c) Women would be encouraged to stay virgins because their families would get little or no bride price if they were not.

d) Men would be highly encouraged to think about the long-time aspects of marriage rather than just the bed-time aspects of marriage. Most men will not spend a large amount of money on something that they are not very serious about.

LETTER CONTINUES:

3). If you had a daughter that is raped, let's not go to the civil authorities (remember, they didn't do that in the Bible), let's just make him marry her or pay a fine! This would also mean, that if a man raped a widow or divorced woman, (this could be an older widow in the church or a divorced sister), there would be no civil recourse because he had not violated any male's rights, (i.e., she was not under the authority of any man not being a wife, so the union was not adulterous, and she was not a virgin!, just recently ran across this information in a book I'm reading on Jewish law from a local synagogue, there was no legal penalty for rape of women of

Continued on page 28

“Passover” from page 1

see: “You are not permitted to offer the passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you. But at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name, only there shall you offer the passover sacrifice....”

All of this makes sense if the Eternal intended the Passover to be a tabernacle sacrifice from the beginning—the first Passover had to be different because there was no tabernacle built yet!

The Right Attitude Is More Important than “On Time.”

Of all the appointed days that the Eternal has given, **the Passover is the only one where the Eternal has provided for a “second chance”.** People

Dear Abi...

We would like to give a brief tribute to a woman of the Bible who is rarely mentioned. We do not know much about her, but her trust in the Eternal and dedication to child-rearing must have been truly awesome. In ancient Israel, children of kings were usually raised by their mothers—kings had “more important things to do”.

Abi or **Abijah**, as she is also called, (2Kngs 18:2; 2Chr 29:1) was the daughter of Zechariah, an evil Israelite King who was murdered after six months of rulership (2Kngs 15:8-11). Her husband was Ahaz, an evil king in Judah (2Chr 28:22-29:1). It is unlikely that Ahaz ever arranged for his son, Hezekiah, to have any instruction in the way of the Eternal. Even with these difficulties, Abi managed to teach Hezekiah so much respect for the Eternal that in the first month of his reign, he vigorously began to re-institute the true worship and to destroy the false religion. He was only 25. It was not the priests or Levites who were “pushing him to change,” but it was Hezekiah who motivated them (2Chr 29:3-4).

At the time of the resurrection, we will be able to hear Abi’s story. But, for now, we give her this tribute, and pray that the Eternal will continue to inspire other women and men to powerfully stand up for Him in the face of opposition as Abi and Hezekiah did.

can do it in the second month if they are on a trip or “unclean” (Num 9:10-13). For the other holy days, a person who misses the service or sacrifices has no “second chance” to observe them.

We understand that “physical uncleanness” is a representation of “spiritual uncleanness” or overt sin in our lives. It was not some exact 24-hour period that was the most important part. If a person missed the Passover, he could participate in the second.

Beside the difficulty in determining which day and time to celebrate Passover, we have the additional difficulty of determining when to start each month and year (see the *Calender Conference* article in this issue). The Eternal is not speaking directly to us about these things today, but is speaking “with stammering lips and another tongue” (Is 28:11). We must attempt to understand His truth from two- and three-thousand-year-old writings in a language which does not allow exact word for word translation. We must also deal with the fact that thousands of people have written or spoken on these subjects and disagreed on many significant points.

How does the Eternal treat people who want to keep the Passover, but may not know how to do everything the way He would like it? What do you do if you have not studied the subject enough to be absolutely convicted of what you should do? We have an enlightening situation like this recorded in 2 Chronicles 29 and 30. Hezekiah became king and immediately set about to begin restoring the true worship. He did not start by writing a long paper on the law or a “master plan” for restoring every detail of the temple worship. He took action. He had the Levites sanctify themselves and the temple. He had the temple cleaned up. He set up the singers and musicians to sing praises to the Eternal. He sacrificed many animals as a symbol of thanks. He followed the law to the best of his ability, but when there were not enough priests to handle all the sacrifices according to the law, “their brethren the Levites helped them” (2Chr 29:34).

When the Passover time came, there were still not enough sanctified priests, and most of the nation of Judah had not gathered to Jerusalem (2Chr 30:3). What did Hezekiah do? Did he decide to get together with only the “righteous peo-

ple” that were prepared and keep a Passover by themselves? They could have used the law in Numbers 9:13 to “cut off” all the other people who did not come in time. **But Hezekiah was not interested in exalting himself and a few other “righteous.”** He was interested in helping all the Israelites to repent and keep the Passover (2Chr 30:5-11). Many people laughed at Hezekiah’s calls for repentance, but that did not stop him. So others could come, **“the king and his leaders and all the congregation in Jerusalem** had agreed to keep the Passover in the **second month”** (2Chr 30:2).

It doesn’t say that the Eternal told them to change it, it says the **people** decided to. How can men decide to change a Holy Day? The “irregularities” did not stop there. Some people were not properly sanctified to kill their own lambs—so the Levites helped with that. Others ate the Passover unsanctified. “...But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, ‘May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone *who* prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though *he* is not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary.’ And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people” (2Chr 30:18-20).

Even though the Law does not specifically say to do so, the people kept a full seven days of unleavened bread in the second month—using the time to teach the knowledge of the Eternal. **It went so well, that the whole assembly decided to keep another seven days. Another man-made change to the holy days!** What did the Eternal think of this? “Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven” (2Chr 30:27).

The message of this chapter is that the Eternal honors our good intentions when we have a lack of understanding or are not able to keep His law. A thorough study of all the Scriptures, history and arguments relating to the Passover can take hundreds of hours. For some people, it may take years for them to complete that study. For some people it may not be the most important thing they have to study. People who believe “God only works through one man at a time” probably need to study government in

the Bible. Otherwise, they can never grow beyond the understanding of their leader—who may be too busy to study. People who have a mate threatening to divorce them probably need to study marriage more than they need to study the timing of the Passover. **You can participate in Passover services this year and not feel guilty if you do not understand many of the technical aspects of its chronology.**

This does not mean that a “good attitude” is a license to ignore the Bible. When David first decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant back, he allowed it to be carried in a cart (2Sam 6). He seemed to be in a good attitude—he had instruments ready and was praising the Eternal. Yet he failed to have the Levites carry the Ark on their shoulders as prescribed in Numbers 4:5-12. He may have used a cart because the Philistines sent the Ark back in a cart—but what the Eternal accepted from the Philistines was not the same as what He accepted from Israel—Israel knew the Law and had Levites—the Philistines did not. This mistake cost Uzzah his life when he touched the ark contrary to the law. Later, David realized the mistake and did not repeat it.

As Hezekiah was diligent to reinstall the Levites as teachers of the Law, so must we never become complacent in our current knowledge. It is unlikely that Hezekiah’s second Passover departed from the law as much as his first. Similarly, the Eternal is merciful to us if we honestly do not know. But we must continue to grow in grace and knowledge so that we can continually serve Him better.

When Was the Passover Observed In the Old Testament?

Since ancient Israel had only the Old Testament to determine when to keep the Passover, the necessary information must be there.

Read Exodus 12; note the various points that explain the timing. To most first-time readers it is clear: they killed the lamb on the 14th day of the month, and left Egypt that night. They were told to eat completely dressed and ready to travel—they even had their kitchen utensils packed (Ex 12:11, 34). They were told to eat unleavened bread with the Passover—they were to begin eating it on the 14th day at evening (the end of

the day) to the 21st day at evening.

We know that the children of Israel stayed in their houses while the death angel passed at midnight (v 29). Exactly when did they leave? The Eternal told Moses when they would leave—twice:

And the LORD said to Moses, “I will bring yet one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, **he will surely drive you out** of here altogether (Ex 11:1).

And all these your [Pharaoh’s] servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, “Get out, and all the people who follow you!” **After that I will go out...**” (Ex 11:8).

This prophecy of the Eternal was fulfilled exactly. We see the sequence of their journey in Exodus 12:33-37:

And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.”³⁵ Now the children of Israel **had done** according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing.³⁶ And the LORD **had given** the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.³⁷ Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.

When the Egyptians sent them out, they left. It was still night (Deut 16:1). There was not a long period of time required to spoil the Egyptians here. The reference to spoiling the Egyptians is in the “perfect” tense, indicating an action already accomplished. The Israelites were given instructions to spoil twice before (Ex 3:22,11:2). One of the items they received as spoil was clothing (v 35). Where was their clothing? Already packed to be carried on their shoulders (v 34). This verse here was showing that they were not going out empty handed, the Eternal provided them compensation for all the years that they worked for Egyptians.

One statement might seem to contradict the rest of the chapter. Moses told the people “and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning” (Ex 12:22). Why did he say this? The next verse explains—so they would be in their houses with the blood on the door when

the firstborn were slain. However, was this a command that the Eternal gave to Moses? We have the original words that the Eternal spoke to Moses in Exodus 11:4-8. The Eternal told Moses the exact time of the firstborn slaying (midnight), but Moses did not repeat that to the people. Instead, he said: “And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.” Why?

We must remember that these were a people who did not have clocks—and probably very few windows. Their only means to tell when it was midnight was to go outside and look at the moon—exactly what he **did not** want them to do. Rather than give a complex set of instructions or risk losing the lives of people who would miscalculate midnight and loose their firstborn by being outside, he simply told them to stay in their houses until morning. When it was time to leave Egypt, he simply gave them a new command that replaced his old command. We can see another similar example of a “temporary command” in these verses:

But Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, **stand firm**, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to **keep still.**”¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to **go forward**” (Ex 14:13-15, NRSV).

Moses did not want the Israelites to scatter in an effort to escape the chariots, so he told them twice to stand still. But shortly after that he passed on the Eternal’s command to go forward. Did the people say, “No, Moses, we cannot go because you told us to stand still?” Probably not. Similarly, when the slaying of the firstborn was complete and the Egyptians were urging the Israelites to leave, would the Israelites say “No, Moses, we cannot leave, you told us to stay inside until morning?”

With the information presented here, the time-table seems quite understandable: the lamb was slain on “the evening” of the 14th, eaten “that night” before midnight (the beginning of the 15th) and then the Israelites left right after midnight. This is confirmed by Numbers 33:3:

They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of

the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.

Did All the Events Related to the Passover Occur on One Day?

Does this mean, then, that the Passover meal actually was eaten on the 15th and that the “passing over” the Israelites houses also occurred on the 15th? Yes it does. If you use a concordance and look up all the Scriptures that contain the word “passover”, you will find that the only specific thing that was commanded to be done on that day was to slay the lamb. The often-used expression “keep the passover or “kept the passover” are less than ideal translations (see Num 9 or 2Chr 30 & 35).

The Hebrew word translated “keep” in these verses is *asah*. It is a very general word that means “to do.” When

the **sacrifice**—only occasionally used to refer to a time period. The first section of Exodus 12 talks about the Passover lamb. In verse 11 we find:

And thus you shall eat it [the lamb]: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. **It is the Lord's Passover.**

Using a concordance, you can find numerous references to “kill the passover,” “cook the passover,” “slay the passover,” “eat the passover,” etc. These are things done to a lamb, not to a “day.” There are two Scriptures in the King James that appear to say that the Passover is a “day,” but the New Revised Standard Version seems to be much closer to the Hebrew in this case:

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD (Lev 23:5, NRSV).

the 14th are to kill the Passover and to put out leaven. There is no command to eat the Passover on the 14th. Today, many Jews and other Sabbath keepers say that the Passover is the 15th. It is true that the Passover lamb is eaten on that day, but calling the 15th “the Passover” creates some confusion. Therefore, we avoid saying we believe in a “15th Passover.” The lamb was slain and prepared on the 14th late in the day, so we say we believe in a “late 14th Passover”. (We use the term “early 14th Passover to refer to those that believe the lamb was killed at the beginning of the 14th, just after sunset, and eaten the same day.)

The “night to be much observed” (Ex 12:42, KJV), therefore, is the eating of the Passover meal! If not, the Eternal’s plan was a failure because nowhere, in Scripture or ancient history, do we find anyone keeping a “night to be much observed” that it not associated with eating the Passover lamb.

When Was the Passover Killed?

The last point we would like to cover is the meaning of the Hebrew words that signify the time to kill the Passover. It is important to realize that people did not have wrist watches for most of history, and many people did not even have clocks. Our English words for general times of the day reflect that. If someone says they will visit you in your office tomorrow morning, we expect they might come between 8 AM and noon. If they said they would visit you at your home in the morning, and they knew that you had a day job, we would expect them to come visit about 7 AM. If they said they were coming *very early in the morning*, we might expect 2 or 3 AM. Our English word “evening” is not quite as extensive, but is similar; it can refer to late afternoon or into the night.

The Hebrew words for “evening” (*erev*) and “morning” (*boqer*) can have a very broad meaning. They are first used in Scripture here: “So the evening and the morning **were** the first day” (Gen 1:5). “Morning” appears to be sunrise to noon, and “evening” is noon to sunset. There are prepositions that modify *erev* in Hebrew to denote more specific meanings—one of which is the “end of the day.” We could find no case where *erev* meant a dark period at the **beginning** of a 24-hour day. The definition of the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of

Is Exodus 16:1-21 a Sabbath Day?

Some see the references to “the sixth day” in these verses and conclude that the instructions must have been given on the Sabbath so that people could count six days to the next “preparation day.” If so, it would have been wrong for the Israelites to gather and prepare quail before sunset. This would then support the idea that *ben ha arbayim* (when they ate the quail) means “twilight.”

However, there is nothing in this section that indicates it is a Sabbath. The expression “sixth day” can refer to the sixth day of the week—it does not imply a counting of days. They are not told to gather manna and quail for six days in a row until the following Sabbath (Ex 16:25-26). Secondly, verse 1 states they were traveling on that day—not something they would do on a Sabbath. Finally, the practicality is wrong. Was the Eternal teaching them to get busy and work hard the minute the Sabbath was over? Also, it would be very difficult to remove the feathers and gut quail without sunlight. We challenge anyone to try processing such small birds by twilight, moon-light or fire light.

The Biblical evidence that *ben ha arbayim* is in the afternoon is given at right.

used in the context of animals, it usually has the sense of killing and preparing. It is used in Genesis 18:7 to prepare a calf for eating. It is sometimes translated “sacrifice” (Ex 10:25; Lev 23:19, etc.). Other times, it is translated “offer” (Ex 29:36,38,39,41; Lev 6:22, etc.). If we properly read the Scriptures that say “keep the passover” as “do the passover” or “offer the passover,” then it is much easier to understand what actually happened on the 14th.

It also helps to understand exactly how the word “passover” is used in the Bible. The name is derived from the “passing over” the houses of the Israelites when the Egyptian firstborn were slain (Ex 12:13). But the term in Scripture is continually used to refer to

On the fourteenth day of the first month there shall be a passover offering to the LORD (Num 28:16).

Even though the term “Passover” originally referred to the sacrifice, it was also loosely applied to the entire Feast season:

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten (Ezk 45:21).

This is **not** saying that the killing of the lamb commanded on the 14th is now done during a 7-day feast. It is just acknowledging a broader use of the term “Passover”.

After the Exodus, the only commands we find that must be observed on

the month, clearly shows this:

It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the **ninth day of the month at evening**, from evening [of the previous day] to evening [this day], you shall celebrate your sabbath (Lev 23:32).

Unfortunately, there is a certain amount of confusion in the translation of the Hebrew expression most often used to give the timing of the Passover sacrifice. The King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, and most similar translations say:

...and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening (Ex 12:6, KJV).

Some Bibles may have a footnote saying "between the evenings." The Hebrew expression is *ben Ha arbayim*, which literally means "between the evenings". Young's Literal Translation, Green's literal translation, the Darby Bible all say "between the evenings." Many modern translations say "at twilight." A significant portion of scholars believe that this expression means "between sunset and dark". The Stone Edition of the Chumash (A Jewish Translation) says "in the afternoon." **What does the expression *ben ha arbayim* mean?**

Books on the Passover usually have an entire chapter devoted to this expression. We must realize that languages contain figures of speech—expressions that have a specific meaning, but are not literally true. You know that "daybreak" in English is the beginning of the day.

But supposing you did not, and decided to determine its meaning by looking up "day" and "break" in a dictionary. You find a "Day" could be 24-hours or just the time when there is sunlight. You find "break" has many meanings—most implying the destruction or interruption of something. You might conclude that "daybreak" is the end of the sunlight because that is when it is interrupted or destroyed. You might even conclude that it is the end of the 24-hour period, or midnight. This example shows the difficulty we can have trying to define a word from its etymology. Let us first see what we can learn about the meaning of *ben ha arbayim* from the Scriptures.

There are eleven places where *ben ha arbayim* is used in Scripture. Strong's Concordance will not help you discover them since it uses the same number, 6153, for both *erev* and *ben ha arbayim*. Young's Analytical concordance does note the different Hebrew expression in a footnote. Before we begin our study of this expression, it is important to note a major point. In our day of electric lights and automobiles, we think nothing of night-time work or travel. But when the Bible was written, most outside work and travel was accomplished during the day. Even our Savior said "the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

In Exodus 30:8, *ben ha arbayim* is used to describe the time of the second incense offering (the first was a morning offering) and the time that Aaron lights the tabernacle lamps. It might seem logical that lamps would be lit just before it

is dark outside. But large buildings with few windows become dark inside long before it is dark outside. Some such buildings require the continual burning of lamps in order to see inside. The only thing we can conclude from this passage is that *ben ha arbayim* must represent a time when there is at least some light outside.

In Exodus 16:12, *ben ha arbayim* describes the time that the Israelites would "eat meat". The Eternal promised to send them quail "at evening" (Hebrew *erev*—Ex 16:8). There are three references to "evening and morning" (Ex 16:6-7,8,13). These are references to general time periods—similar to Genesis 1. It takes time to gather manna, time for quail to fly in, and time to gather quail. These activities are best done during the day. If the quail began to come at noon (the first possible beginning of "evening"), it would take a couple of hours to collect some, pluck their feathers, gut them, and cook them. **That would place *ben ha arbayim* some time later than 2:00 PM.**

Four times, *ben ha arbayim* refers to the evening sacrifice that was offered every day (Ex 29:39,41; Num 28:4,8). When was the evening sacrifice offered? The Scripture does not give us an exact hour, but the general time is clear. The sacrifices occurred during the time of the tabernacle meetings:

This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where **I will meet you** to speak with you. And there **I will meet with the children of Israel**, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory (Ex 29:42-43).

Daily temple meetings certainly were held during the day.

We can gather even more information about the time of the "evening sacrifice" from Ezra 9:5-10:7. Ezra, "at the evening sacrifice" began to pray. His prayer was very lengthy, during which time "a very large congregation of **men, women, and children** assembled" at the temple. After this prayer, they made a covenant, swore an oath, and issued a proclamation. **With men, women and children present, this would have been a daytime meeting that began at least a couple of hours before sunset.**

Similarly, we can learn from 1 Kings 18:29-45. Verse 29 states: "And it was

Is *ben ha arbayim* "anytime during a 24-hour day"?

Servants' News received one paper that interpreted *ben ha arbayim* (literally "between the evenings") as "between the evenings that begin and end a day." In other words, it means "any time during a 24-hour period." With this interpretation, numerous problems of reconciling Old and New Testament chronology disappear—sacrifices can take place either early or late on the 14th and still fulfill the scripture.

Unfortunately, we cannot agree with this interpretation. A Hebrew expression meaning "from evening to evening" is found in Leviticus 23:32. Giving a 24-hour definition to *ben ha arbayim* would render meaningless most of its uses in the Bible. No other holy day has a time qualifier associated with them—why does Passover have one if it simply means "anytime during the day?" How would the Israelites know when to kill the Passover, offer the evening sacrifice, or trim the temple lamps if the command meant "anytime during the day?"

We believe that the Eternal is capable of giving instructions that were both clear for ancient Israel and prophetically accurate for New Testament events.

so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice.” While the word “evening” is not in the Hebrew text, it is obvious that this is not the morning sacrifice since “midday was past.” If we read the rest of the chapter, we find that Elijah built an altar and laid out his sacrifice, the priests drenched his sacrifice three times, the Eternal consumed it, the priests of Baal were executed, Elijah prayed seven times for rain, and eventually “the sky became black with clouds” (v 45). These several hours of activity must have occurred before sunset—one would not describe a sky as becoming “black with clouds” if it became black because the sun was set.

From these verses we learn that *ben ha arbayim*, the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, must be a couple of hours after noon, and a couple of hours before sunset.

The other five references to *ben ha arbayim* are the time of the Passover. We can be sure that the time represented by *ben ha arbayim* is contained within the evening (*erev*) because the time of the Passover is also twice described as in the evening (Hebrew *erev*—Deut 16:6, Josh 5:10). How could both Hebrew words be used to describe the same event if they did not represent at least part of the same time? With this close similarity, we can see why the KJV and other translators simply chose to translate *ben ha arbayim* the same as *erev*. They are much closer than those that use “twilight.”

One Bible that we have found that we believe correctly translates *ben ha arbayim* is the Chumash (Stone Edition, 1995). It uses “**afternoon**” and gives this explanation:

ben ha arbayim—*In the afternoon* [lit., *between the evenings*]. The afternoon is given this name because it falls between two “sunsets”; the first is when the noontime sun begins to dip toward the horizon, and the second when it sets below the horizon (*Rashi*).

Most historical sources place both the time of the daily sacrifice and the Passover sacrifice at 3 PM—consistent with the Bible. And finally, “Christ, our Passover, [who] was sacrificed for us” (1Cor 5:7) died at 3PM (the ninth hour since sunrise, Mark 15:34-37). But that brings us to the new Testament!

There are many more Old Testament verses that can enter into the Passover

discussion. If we publish a more exhaustive paper, we will certainly add them to it. However, we believe we have covered the principle Scriptures here.

Difficulty With the New Testament

Reconciling the events surrounding the last two days of our Savior’s life have been difficult for theologians throughout history. We cannot solve all of the smaller problems in this article, but we hope to find an answer for the major problem, which is: **What was our Savior doing during His Last Supper on earth, and why?** Matthew, Mark and Luke seem to say that he was keeping the Passover. John seems to say that the Passover occurred after our Savior’s death. How can we resolve this contradiction? There are at least three major explanations with three major variations each. **We include a brief summary of each explanation so you know which ideas we have considered:**

1. The Last Supper was **the** Passover as Matthew, Mark and Luke imply.
 - a. The Old Testament sacrifice was killed early on the 14th and, so our Savior was keeping the Passover at the normal time. The Jews were a day late, but John fails to note the fact.
 - b. The Old Testament sacrifice was on the late 14th, but our Savior changed the celebration of it to the early 14th and Christians continue at that time, where Jews continue as they had before.
 - c. The Old Testament sacrifice was on the late 14th and our Savior’s Last Supper was on the late 14th-early 15th. He was actually killed on the First Day of Unleavened Bread.
2. The Old Testament Passover was the late 14th, but our Savior’s Last Supper was a “special” or “early” Passover. (While this sounds nice, there is no hint of a “special” or “early” Passover in the Scriptures, nor is there any strong historical indication. If anyone knows of an ancient historical source for any of the following, please contact *Servants’ News*.)
 - a. Jewish tradition allowed a man to keep a Passover at any time if he knew that he was going to die before the next one. Our Savior

fell into this category, so he held it a day early.

- b. A Jewish tradition allowed a teacher to conduct a day-early Passover with his students for their education, then they would be with their families for the regular Passover. (Similarly, a grandfather with many descendants might keep the Passover a night early with his sons, then the sons would be with their families on the regular night). Our Savior’s early Passover would seem perfectly normal to everyone if such a tradition existed.
 - c. No traditions were involved, but since our Savior could not keep the regular Passover or the second Passover, he decided to do it a night early.
3. The Last Supper was not a Passover meal at all. There are several explanations as to why Matthew, Mark and Luke seem to say that it was:
 - a. Since Old Testament manuscripts are more reliable than the New, we know when the Passover was and we can simply treat the New Testament as being in error.
 - b. The apparent contradiction can be resolved by properly translating the difficult passages in the New Testament.
 - c. We can understand the New Testament if we understand how our Savior spoke to his disciples.

Obviously, all of these ideas cannot be right. Nevertheless, all of them are serious attempts to resolve the difficulties in the Scriptures. We should not look down on others who have a different understanding than we do. The subject is vast and we do not all have the same set of facts (and errors) in our minds. We will be judged by what is in our own mind, not what is in our neighbor’s. This writer is using the last two approaches (3-b and 3-c) and believes this article to be an accurate reflection of the truth of the Bible. But we are all still learning!

Our Savior Kept the Same Feast Days as Other Jews

We find no big difference between the Passovers kept in the Old and New Testaments. This very significant statement appears in Luke:

His parents went to Jerusalem

every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to **the custom of the feast** (Luke 2:41-42).

The word "custom" is *ethos* which means "usual way of doing things." It is not the same as "according to the law." This word is used 11 other places in the Scriptures with a very similar meaning. We cannot cover all of them here, but we will cover two:

So it was, that while he [Zacharias] was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the **custom** of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord (Luke 1:8-9).

Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. (John 19:40).

The Scriptures show how the priests were set into 24 divisions (1Chr 23-24), but they contain nothing about how priests used lots to decide who would burn the incense. The Scriptures mention burying people with spices, but there is no command or spelled-out method. These were customs or traditions (though they did **not** defy the law as some other Pharisaic customs did.) **If** the Biblical Passover was significantly different that the customary Passover of the day, Luke used the wrong words!

Some people have tried to show that the Jewish Passover was different than the Biblical Passover because John uses the phrases "Jews' Passover" and "Passover, a Feast of the Jews".(John 2:13, 6:4, 11:55). This is not sensible as John uses the plain expression "Passover" six other times—including critical places like John 18:28, where he describes the Passover kept by the Jewish leaders. Also, we see that John uses similar expressions for other Feast days (John 5:1, 7:2). It is likely that John included these references to Jewish feasts because he was writing to a partly gentile audience and wanted to occasionally assure them that the Feasts the believes were keeping were the same as the "Jewish feasts"—not some pagan Feasts. There is no hint that the timing or celebration of Feasts were incorrect.

Major Key to New Testament Passover Problems

Most Bible-readers realize that our

Savior spoke in parables because He did not intend to make the meaning clear to everyone at that time:

And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand'" (Luke 8:10).

We must also realize that our Savior said many things that his own disciples and apostles did not understand. He was often distraught with them for not understanding. Please note the emphasis in the following verse:

⁶ Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." ⁷ And they **reasoned among themselves**, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." ⁸ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? ⁹ **Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?** [Food was something He could make any time!] ¹⁰ Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? ¹¹ **How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" ¹² **Then they understood** that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:6-12).

Next we must ask, did the disciples understand everything Jesus taught while he was on earth, or did some of this understanding not come until later?

His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him (John 12:16).

Obviously, they did not understand some of the things He said until much later. How much of our Savior's message was understood by the people and how much by the disciples is an interesting study in itself. You can find most of the related Scriptures by simply looking up "understand" and "understood" in a concordance. We will now focus on some difficult-to-understand passages

related to the Passover.

For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him (Mark 9:31-32).

There are other passages parallel to the above. The disciples were still thinking too much about a physical kingdom in their day. The following passage was so hard to understand that many quit following them, yet it was vital to the understanding of Passover. Please read the entire passage with our added emphasis.

⁵¹ "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. **If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh**, which I shall give for the life of the world." ⁵² The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" ⁵³ Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you **eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood**, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ **For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.** ⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him...." ⁵⁷ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life....** ⁵⁸ **From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.** (John 6:51-56,63,66).

We find that our Savior used food for spiritual analogies many times—probably to show us that things of the spirit are every bit as real and important as the food we eat. Here is another example vital to the understanding of the Passover:

³¹ In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But He said to them, "**I have food to eat of which you do not know.**" ³³ Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work**" (John 4:31-34).

How Our Savior Ate the Passover

With the above verses well in mind, let us look at the following three parallel accounts where our Savior talks about keeping or eating the Passover. We are quoting these verses from *The Interlinear Bible* by J. P. Green because it does a good job of saying what the Greek says, rather than saying what most theologians think it means. Even so, notice the *italic* words that are not in the Greek:

¹⁷ ¶ And on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, Where do you desire we should prepare for You to eat the Passover? ¹⁸ And He said, Go into the city to a certain one and say to him, The Teacher says, **My time is near; to [toward] you I will prepare the Passover with My disciples.** ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus ordered them, and prepared the Passover (Matt 26:17-19).

¹² ¶ And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said to him, Where do You desire *that* going we may prepare that You may eat the passover? ¹³ And He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, Go into the city. And you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him. ¹⁴ And wherever he goes in, say to the housemaster, **The Teacher says, Where is the guest room where I may eat the passover with My disciples?** ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room, having been spread and made ready. Prepare for us there. ¹⁶ And His disciples went out and came into the city and found it as He told them. And they prepared the Passover (Mark 14:12-16).

⁷ And the day of the Unleavened came, on which the passover must be killed. ⁸ **And He sent Peter and John, saying, Going, prepare for us the passover, that we may eat.** ⁹ And they said to Him, Where do You desire that we prepare? ¹⁰ And He said to them, Behold, you going into the city, you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house where he goes in. ¹¹ **And you will say to the housemaster of that house, The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room where I may eat the passover with My disciples?** ¹² **And that one will show you a large upper room which he has spread. Prepare**

there. ¹³ And going, they found as He had told them, and they prepared the passover (Luke 22:7-13).

These statements are so similar that they all must be about the same event, yet slightly different details are brought out in each. The **bold** portions above show our Savior's statements about the Passover—he said to prepare the Passover that he might eat of it. But, **what was his food?**

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

Did our Savior participate in this Passover? **Yes he did!** But he did not eat a lamb! That was not his role that year. **He was the lamb!**

For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us (1Cor 5:7).

All of the Passover lambs slain by all the Israelites for over a thousand years pointed to this one Passover. Those lambs were to teach Israel the need for a Savior to come to shed his blood for the deliverance of man from sin (Matt 26:28). Our Savior kept the Passover all the other years of his life because it was in the law and to set a good example for people, but he did not need it for forgiveness of sin—He was perfect! (1Pet 2:22.) He did not come to the Earth so he could **take** the Passover; **He came to BE the Passover.** He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8).

There is no analogy to adequately describe how important this event was, but this one might help: Neil Armstrong may have greatly enjoyed using a toy spaceship to show his children how he trained for space flight. But would he stay on the ground with his toy ship instead of being the first man to walk on the moon? **No way!** His many years of training were for this one event! Similarly, there is no way that our Savior would miss his vital participation in **The Greatest Passover of All Time!**

Nevertheless, his disciples would be left behind. Therefore, our Savior said to them:

Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you (John 13:33).

They would receive one last night of instruction, and then they would be separated. They would keep the Passover

without Him—not understanding what happened until later.

This brings us to an important question. What day did our Savior make his statement about preparing and eating that Passover? If you will look back a couple of columns to the three Gospel accounts, we have underlined the related portion. They all use the term “first of unleavened” in some way, but also mention killing of the Passover. Almost all Passover theorists agree that the lamb was killed before the first of the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. This must be a general expression that was understood to include more time than the seven days. It is not the same as the more precise “days of unleavened” or “feast of unleavened” found elsewhere in the Bible. Since we have a running account from here on, we can be sure that this was the afternoon of the 13th of the first month. Interestingly, Matthew and Mark never mention the word “Passover” again in their Gospels. Luke does, but it is amazing what he says.

His Last Supper Not the Passover

We continue from where we left off in *The Interlinear Bible*:

¹⁴ And when the hour came, He reclined, and the twelve apostles with Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, With desire I desired to eat this passover with you before My suffering. ¹⁶ For I say to you that **never in any way I will eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God** (Luke 22:14-16)

Most people have assumed this verse means “He was physically eating that Passover with his apostles, but would not eat it again.” Most translators thought so, too, so they added words to that effect. But *The Interlinear Bible* is an accurate reflection of the Greek. We can be sure that our Savior is talking about the physical meal here because he also talks about his “suffering,” which was part of His spiritual meal. Later on in the chapter we see that our Savior asks one last time if there were any way to avoid his suffering: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). He would have liked to eat the Passover with his disciples, but his suffering was far more important.

We can know this discourse took place before the Passover by reading the

parallel account of the last supper in John 13. We quote two verses here that make the most important points:

Now **before the feast of the Passover**, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end (John 13:1).

For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, **“Buy those things we need for the feast,”** or that he should give something to the poor (John 13:29).

In the first verse, “before” is the Greek word *pro* which really means “before”. Verse 29 indicates that the disciples thought the merchants would be available—something that would have been impossible if everyone were eating the Passover. Nowhere, in any of the Gospels, do we find our Savior saying “I am now eating the Passover” during this Last Supper. His last Passover was spent as the lamb—being sacrificed. Most scholars agree that the Gospel of John was written later, and he seems to have clarified these timing issues:

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that **they might eat the Passover** (John 18:28).

We must note that John does not say “their Passover” or “the Jew’s Passover” or anything similar. He said “the Passover.” We can also see that our Savior was condemned at the very same time that Passover lambs were being prepared to be slaughtered. Continuing with The Interlinear Bible:

And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about *the* sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, Behold, your king! But they cried out, Away, Away! Crucify him! Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king except Caesar. **Therefore, then, he delivered Him up to them, that He might be crucified** (John 19:14-16).

Many translations say “preparation day”, but that is not in the Greek. The story flow has been continuous since John 18:28 so there is no need for John to tell us what day it is. **He is drawing attention to what time it was**—they were preparing to kill the Passover

lambs.

It is interesting to note that the word used for “bread” in all accounts of the Last Supper is the Greek *artos*, which normally means **leavened** bread. The King James and most other versions do a consistent job of rendering these words. If you see “bread” or “loaf”, it is the Greek *artos*. If you see “unleavened [bread]” then it is the Greek *azumos*, meaning “unleavened”. However, the word *artos* seems to be like the English word “bread”—we assume it to be leavened, but it can include unleavened bread. We see an example of that when our risen Savior “took bread [*artos*], blessed and broke it” (Luke 24:30) the day after he was risen (verses 12-13)—definitely during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The point of this is that we cannot be dogmatic about the type of bread being used unless a verse specifically says “unleavened.”

Explanation of Bread and Wine

Let us continue reading about the Last Supper from The Interlinear Bible:

¹⁷ And taking a **cup**, giving thanks, He said, Take this and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I say to you that in no way will I drink from the produce of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. ¹⁹ And taking a loaf, giving thanks, He broke, and gave to them, saying, This is My body being given for you. Do this for My remembrance. ²⁰ And in the same way **the cup, after having supped**, saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is being poured out for you.

Traditional teaching says that our Messiah changed the symbols of the Passover from lamb and bitter herbs. But any Orthodox Jewish Rabbi will tell you that they have been having bread and wine at their Passover long before the time of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth. As a matter of fact, you can go to almost any conservative or orthodox synagogue today on any Sabbath or holy day (except Atonement) and they will serve bread and wine. They call this a “kiddush”. Some Rabbis will tell you that the bread and wine look forward to the bounty of the earth, but others will tell you that they represent the Messiah to come. The major thing that the Jews do not understand today, is that the Messiah has already come the first time.

It is interesting to note that Luke

records two separate cups of wine, one before dinner and one after. The first one seems to be primarily a part of the meal. The symbolism seems to be more attached to the second cup. Since this Last Supper was held on the eve going into the Passover day, an appointed time mentioned in Leviticus 23, it would have been a normal Jewish practice to have bread and wine at this time. But this is much, much more than just another “kiddush”. It is the time when He explained exactly the purpose of the bread and wine that Jews had been taking for so many years. This explains His saying “I am the living bread which came down from heaven” which we covered earlier in the article—which his disciples did not understand.

Are we, then, encouraging believers today to keep Jewish traditions? Only to the extent that these traditions are in accordance with the Scriptures. Both **Jewish** and **Christian** religious leaders have invented or borrowed a lot of practices that are contrary to Scripture. We should not follow any of them! The common Jewish explanation for the origin of their bread and wine partaking is Genesis 14:18-19:

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth.”

But rather than speculate about the origin of traditions, we can read what the Bible clearly says about keeping it. You will have to be willing to look beyond the man-made headings in your Bible and years of in-grown belief, but the Scripture is plain. Let us start at the beginning of a new section in **1 Corinthians 11:2:**

Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and **keep the traditions** just as I delivered them to you.

The Greek word for “tradition” is *paradosis*—the same word used for the tradition of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:1-2. Again, Paul is not teaching the keeping of all Jewish tradition, **but of specific traditions that he delivered to them.** (If we study all the leaders of Israel and Judah in the Bible, we find only a small percentage were close to the Eternal. Similarly, we might expect only a small percentage of their traditions to

be inspired by the Eternal.) Verses 3 through 16 cover the tradition about how men and women cover their heads when they pray and prophecy. They are very helpful, but do not pertain to the Bread and Wine. We continue in verse 17:

¹⁷Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, **since you come together** not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For first of all, **when you come together as a church** [assembly], I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. ²⁰Therefore **when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.** ²¹For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise **the church** [assembly] of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

Three or four times in this chapter Paul talks about coming together—coming together “as a church.” The word “Passover” is never mentioned in this entire chapter—nor is the Feast of Unleavened Bread or any similar thing. But the coming together as a congregation is mentioned. Paul was dealing with the specific problem of people having a “big feast” rather than taking bread and wine to remember our Savior. We can be sure that Paul is talking about the same subject through the end of the chapter because the problem in verse 21 is answered in verse 34.

Furthermore, we need to ask if Paul's admonitions make any sense if they are for only once a year. Would there be divisions among the people only on Passover? 1 Corinthians chapters 1 and 3 show that divisions were a continual problem. Also, how could people be shamed for having no food on a “once a year” occasion? Certainly they could have saved something for that time. But it is quite logical that people may not have had food to bring every Sabbath.

What do we learn from Paul's statement about the “Lord's Supper”? Was he telling the Corinthians that they should be coming together for the “Lord's Supper”, but they were doing it wrong? Or was he telling them they should not

be coming together at all for purposes of eating the “Lord's supper”? This has been debated by many scholars and I do not know if we can reach a conclusion. We use the term “Last Supper” to refer to our Savior's last meal. Some people refer to their commemoration of this time as the “Lord's Supper,” but others feel that Paul said not to call it that, so they call it a “Memorial Service”. Certainly, we should not let an issue of terminology divide brethren.

Let us continue in The Interlinear Bible:

²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and giving thanks, He broke and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken on behalf of you; this do in remembrance of Me. ²⁵In the same way the cup also, after supping, saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood; **as often as you drink, do this in remembrance of Me** (1Cor 11:23-25, The Interlinear Bible).

²⁶For **as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes** (1Cor 11:26, NKJV).

Verse 23 causes many people to conclude that this is about Passover or that our Savior's Last Supper was the Passover. It would have been quicker for Paul to write “Passover” than “the night in which He was betrayed”, but he wrote the latter—not emphasizing the holy days at all! Paul was not even present with the other Apostles at that time, but somewhere he learned that it was “that night” when our Savior taught them the meaning of the bread and wine that they had been taking so often.

Another reason some believe this is talking about an annual occasion is the expression in the King James “shew the Lord's death.” This sounds very passive—like observing a passing memorial. The word “proclaim” or “preach” is a much better rendering of the Greek *katagello*—most modern translations render it “proclaim” here, but “preach”

in many other places. Verse 26 was not recorded in the Gospels as a part of the Last Supper, but is similar to Luke 24:46-47: “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” When we take the bread and wine, it must remind us that we need to be preaching our Savior's death until he returns!

The Greek word translated “as often as” is *hosakis*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is Revelation 11:6: “and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, **as often as they desire.**” While this word does not automatically imply a high frequency, it would be a logical choice if Paul is talking about bread and wine taken weekly and on holy days. It really makes

Bread & Wine Every Week: Is that Catholic?

Some might wonder if the weekly taking of bread and wine must be wrong because Catholic Church members do this. Just because they may have something right is no reason for any of us to ignore it. But lest anyone think we are intentionally following the Catholic Church (or others), please note there are many areas where we think they are wrong:

- 1) Only the priest is allowed to drink the wine—members are not permitted to obey their Savior here.
- 2) A priest or church official **must** administer the communion—members cannot do it on their own.
- 3) In most services, a priest or other official puts the “communion wafer” in each person's mouth because members are not trusted to touch something so “holy”.

sense for us to be preaching the death of our Savior “often”. Paul chose not to use any of the common Greek expressions that mean “annually”.

²⁷Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²

But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. ³³ Therefore, my brethren, **when you come together** to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you **come together** for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come (1Cor 11:27-34).

These verses bring out the need for continual examination of oneself, not just once per year. Forgiveness of others is something that the Scriptures teach should be done on a daily basis, not yearly. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt 5:23-24). "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph 4:26).

The issue of whether or not we are "worthy" to partake of our Savior's body has been explained well by many teachers. The only thing we are inherently worthy of is death (Rom 3:23,6:23). We must take the sacrifice **in a manner** worthy of our Savior. It must be done seriously, not with an air of self-righteousness, nor a phony air of lowliness or false humility.

How Do We Handle Such a Change in Understanding?

Realizing that some of these Scriptures have been misunderstood by so many for so many years can be a little scary. But many of our readers may have kept Pentecost on different days during their lives. Do they remember being blessed when they kept Pentecost on one day, and cursed when they kept it on another? We have asked and never found anyone that felt they could see more or less of the holy spirit working simply because the day of observance changed. It appears that the Eternal accepted the hearts of people doing what they believed would please him.

We do not ask you to believe this article just because we wrote it. You should never jump to a new understanding out of fear that what you are presently doing is wrong. The Eternal will certainly give you time to understand. But, if you are avoiding the study of a doctrine because you are afraid that you

might have to change, the Eternal will know that, too. We cannot grow in truth if we will not act on new understanding of which we are convicted. We all need to pray for understanding and study the scriptures—and get answers to questions that arise. "We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ..." (Eph 4:14-15).

Far too much of all organized religion has been a series of things for people to do—and the people who do them think they are righteous because they do them. The Old Testament gave many details to follow for temple construction, sacrifices, worship, and other areas of life. Did those things make the those people righteous even when they did them? No! **Does the New Testament contain a detailed outline about how we should conduct our Sabbath services, our holy day services, our "youth activities," our Gospel-preaching plans, etc? No, it does not!** The information in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 is Paul's reaction to existing services, not an outline of how to conduct a service. Even then, only a small percentage of congregations use the information in those chapters, anyway. Most congregations today base their service format on Catholic or Protestant services, not on the format in use by our Savior and his Apostles. (For more information, write for our free article *Assembling on the Sabbath*.)

We need to take a few steps back and look at our own services and then find out what parts of them is found in the Bible. If we read what to do on holy days in the Scriptures, we find we are to assemble, be joyful, sing praises, teach truth, partake of bread and wine, give free-will offerings and offer certain sacrifices. Our Savior fulfilled the sacrifices, so we are left with doing the other things. But in most cases, we do not have any kind of "step by step" procedure on how to do it. Should we pass one glass, or use a lot of little glasses? Should we have a meal with it? Should leaders break the bread, or should each person break their own? Should each person wash one person's feet, or many people's feet? (Our Savior washed the feet of all the apostles.) How long

should services last? What role should children have in services? What are the qualifications of a speaker for services? Should we have one or two services on a Holy Day?

This list of questions could go on for a very long time. We must realize that many decisions have been made by many people to bring us to the practices that we have now. While striving for Biblical and effective practice in our own lives, we should also be tolerant of others who do not have the same understanding. If the Eternal allows righteous and sincere people to be deceived for their entire lives on some scriptural issues, can we not tolerate other's difficulty for a few years? Our Savior said:

For assuredly, I say to you that many **prophets and righteous men** desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it (Matt 13:17).

What Do We Do Now?

Some of our holy day practices are clearly outlined in the Scriptures, but many are not. In general, we believe most of the fruit of our past holy day practices have been good, so we are not in a hurry to depart from it unless we have a Biblical reason. We do not claim to have any divine revelation on the ideal practice for our services today. We all should certainly be asking for the Eternal's understanding on this subject. We will outline our understanding of what should be done, and make a few suggestions. If there are any guiding principles, it is that these days should be used to teach and unify the brethren. Not everyone will learn the same Scriptures at the same rate. Some may study it in weeks. Others may take years to change. We should look for points where our understanding of the Scriptures will allow us to participate with our brethren—we do not want to be as different or contentious as possible.

Passover

The Passover is the 14th day of the first month. The leaven must be put out of our house before the end of this day. We have no clear command to imitate our Savior's Last Supper, though John 13:17 might be considered one. However, it seems that there is much benefit to a once-a-year focus on what our Savior has done—remembering of his suffering before the

joyous Days of Unleavened Bread. The time of this remembrance would certainly be the evening going into the 14th, the time of the Last Supper. If we need a name for this time that will not be offensive to others, the **Memorial Service** might be fitting.

It is very good to read the Scriptures about our Savior's last instructions to his disciples. This lesson needs to be remembered every year. Luke Chapters 22 and 23 are probably the most complete for the first three Gospels. John 13-17 contain much information not found in the other gospels. Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 are excellent prophecies to read in this regard.

While the Scriptures give no specific command to wash exactly one other person's feet each year, it seems that the fruit of this observance has been good. We have heard many first-hand stories of people who thought they had no prejudice against anyone until they had to wash someone's feet. Some people believe that we should not do foot-washing because it is something that almost nobody does in our society today. They would like to replace it with shoe-shining, dish-washing, car-washing or some other "menial" task of today. If a local fellowship agrees on a ceremony more closely fitting our present society, we see nothing wrong with doing it. However, if a congregation gets into arguments on how they should serve each other... they are not learning the lesson of brotherly service! It is sad if people think they were fulfilling the purpose of John 13 by washing one person's feet once a year. If foot washing is done, someone should clearly point out that people are **not** doing it as a "good deed" or to earn religious "brownie points" but to **symbolize the way we should live our lives.**

The partaking of bread and wine is appropriate on this day, but not because it is the Passover. As we have indicated before, we believe that Paul taught the tradition of regular partaking of bread and wine—probably on every Sabbath and holy day. The question is, should this be leavened bread or unleavened bread? The Passover is not in the seven days of unleavened bread, and the instructions for eating the Passover meal apply to the next night—which is the first day of unleavened bread. The New Testament Scriptures are of little help.

Luke uses the same Greek expression for "took bread" for the Last Supper, during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and for the feeding of the 5000—which was almost certainly leavened bread (Luke 22:19, 24:30, 9:16). We can see in the Scriptures that unleavened bread represents the physical body of our Savior, which was without sin. But what would leavened bread represent? The answer is plain:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The **bread which we break**, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, **though many, are one bread and one body**; for we all partake of that one bread (1Cor 10:16-17).

The leavened bread represents the body of our Savior today that has sin in it—us. He is purifying His body now, but the process is not yet complete. In the Old Testament, all the offerings were unleavened (Lev 2:11) except for the "peace offering" (Lev 7:13) and the two loaves on Pentecost (Lev 23:17). These unleavened offerings were offered many times **outside of the Days of Unleavened Bread.** At this point in time, we must say that we do not have any specific Biblical understanding of when leavened or unleavened bread should be used except during the Day of Unleavened Bread. Our most likely linguistic assumption is that they ate leavened bread during the Last Supper. But since we are talking about the suffering of our Perfect Savior, unleavened bread seems to be the better symbol. Also, we should take into account that we may be meeting with brethren who believe they must use unleavened bread on this day.

What should the role of children be on this day? The Bible nowhere forbids children's participation in these services. The Scriptures show that adults have a tendency to want to exclude children from access to our Savior (Matt 19:13-15). Are we saying the children are converted? No. But children learn more by seeing other people do things and doing things themselves than they do from profound, hour-long sermons. These days are excellent times to teach the truth to our children, which we are commanded to do! (Deut 4:9.) Some have used the argument that since only the circumcised were allowed to take the Passover, only the baptized should be

allowed to take bread and wine. We would like to point out that none of the Apostles at the Last Supper had been baptized in the name of Yeshua (Jesus) or received the holy spirit. Further more, Paul says: "Let a man examine himself" (1Cor 11:28). Children need to examine themselves and think about how they have been living.

While it is clear that the suffering and sacrifice of our Savior should not be treated lightly, the near-silent service that some groups practice cannot be found in the Scriptures. The Bible records many conversations that night. The Bible also records the singing of "a hymn" (Matt 26:30), but does not command "only one" or specifically say that they never sang any others. We have many commands to praise the Eternal for his marvelous works. What is more marvelous than the sacrifice of his son? Yet there are some songs that would not seem appropriate for the commemoration of His suffering.

Can you observe this evening with another group of people who think they are keeping the Passover on this night? Probably so. Most of what you will do will be the same as we have suggested here. However, since there is no specific command in Scripture to observe this evening, some may not want to do it at all—and they probably should not. "For whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom 14:23). But neither should they condemn others who do find a reason to observe it.

The First Day of Unleavened Bread

The Passover lamb was eaten on the beginning of the first day of unleavened bread—at night. Calling it the Feast of the Passover made sense for the Israelites since that was the night that they ate the lamb. It was a victory celebration for the salvation of the first-born and the deliverance from Egypt. Today, we do not sacrifice a lamb, but we do need to celebrate the Sacrifice of our Savior and our deliverance from Sin. This is a **Night to be Much Observed**, and there are many commands that we can and should fulfill.

Israel was commanded to eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs on this night. We now understand that the unleavened bread represents the body of our sinless

Continued on page 24

With many brethren now meeting in congregations of various sizes, including small "Living Room Churches," there is a need to find or create new customs and traditions in conducting services. Some of these changes are the result of new doctrinal study, and some come from practical necessity: sometimes, the old buildings, hymnbooks and ministers are simply not around any more to perform their former functions.

The following letter shares the plans for this year of an independent group in New Mexico. It also solicits input from others on suitable music for the activity described. We feel our readers may find some of the ideas presented here helpful when making their own plans. Our local fellowship here in Michigan will likely use some of these ideas for our commemoration. We will be sharing some of our musical ideas with this group. If you have any suggestions of your own, please send them to us or the New Mexico group.

I was wondering if you might be able to give me some advice on the subject of music.

The Home Fellowship I met with observes the Passover at the beginning of the Nisan 14, and the Night To Be Observed at the beginning of Nisan 15. We are looking for appropriate hymns and songs to sing on the NTBMR. We are looking for 9 to 12 songs to use that evening. Right now we have no idea what songs to use. We want to have something that focuses on the meaning of the evening and is uplifting. We definitely need something a little bit more rousing than Dwight Armstrong's hymns. I actually like his hymns, but they don't seem appropriate for the evening. I would appreciate any suggestions you might have in the way of songs and hymns to sing.

We are planning on doing things a little different this year, at least for us it's different. The evening will open with prayer. The host will give a short message explaining the meaning of this evening. We then will sing three or four songs of hymns. Or we might sing first, and have the message afterwards—we are still working on that. During the meal, the host starting with himself, will recount how God called him, and brought him into the church. Then



Music for Spring Holy Day Services

working around the table, the host will ask each person to tell the story of their calling and conversion. Since the evening is a celebration of our deliverance from spiritual Egypt and sin, this seems like a good way to focus our thoughts and conversion on the meaning of the NTBMR. Children will be asked when was the first time they realized that their religion was different from that of other people. By asking these questions we hope to get everyone involved in the evening's activities.

After dinner, we will sing more songs and hymns, followed by dessert. During the dessert, the host will start another round of questions. This time the question being what was a spiritual lesson you have learned this past year, or at any other time that you would like to share. When dessert is finished, we will end the evening with more songs and hymns and a final prayer.

We hope to put together a little booklet that will have various scripture verses in it pertaining to the meaning of the evening. The host will build his message around these scriptures. The booklet will have the order of activities for the evening, the questions to be asked, and a copy of the words for the songs we will be singing. Everyone will have a copy of the booklet so that they will not have to worry and Bibles and hymnals.

We would appreciate any suggestions you might have on music to use for this evening.

Thanks,
Calvin Lashway
Las Cruces, New Mexico
rlashway@NMSU.edu
505-524-4530

While we have not completed our search for appropriate music, either for this activity or for regular weekly services, we offer one recommendation that many may find helpful. **WORD, Inc.** produces many hymnals and tapes under its **Maranatha** label that contain mostly inspiring, Biblically-sound wor-

ship music. Although there may be an occasional song you may have to avoid for doctrinal reasons, many of the lyrics are straight from the scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. A wide variety of musical styles are represented, from ballads to anthems to lively Messianic-style choruses.

We particularly recommend a compilation titled **Maranatha Music Praise Chorus Book, Expanded 3rd Edition**. This edition includes over 300 of the most popular songs of this kind from the past 25 years. We have heard from "Church of God" folks across the country in a variety of groups who have independently started using this particular material. There is a spiral-bound accompaniment book that includes both the musical notes and the guitar/keyboard chords. And there is a "words only" edition for about \$3 each that would allow each member of a group to have their own copy inexpensively.

These hymnals should be available from your local Bible Book Store anywhere in America. Just ask for the third edition of the **Maranatha Praise Chorus Book**, (red cover), copyright 1993. The songs in the hymnal are included on a series of tapes also distributed by **WORD/Maranatha**, which should also be available through the same store where you find the hymnal. For this immediate Passover, it may be helpful to buy just one tape containing some appropriate songs and learn those.

We will be obtaining a set of the Maranatha books for our Michigan congregation, which we will use along with other traditional hymns. Many of the traditional hymns from the 1800s are no longer bound by copyrights. It is legal to copy these hymns and make your own book. Also, see "New Hymnal Available Soon" (produced by Mark Graham) on page 23 of our Mar/April issue. Finally, some congregations find it acceptable to use songs from hymnals produced by other "Church of God" congregations. By using one or more of the above methods, you should be able to have a joyful song service at your Feasts this year.

—Pam Dewey and Norman Edwards

“Passover” from page 22

Savior. We believe the bitter herbs represent the misery and difficulty caused by the effects of sin. Our Savior suffered these things, and so do we. Somewhere, the Israelites learned to symbolically take wine on this day, and some Jews today understand that the wine looks forward to the Messiah. We now understand that the wine represents His blood shed for us. There is no specific formula in the Scriptures for how to serve the bread and wine. Since we are told to “bear our cross” and “work out our own salvation” (Luke 14:27, Phil 2:12), it seems sensible that brethren should not have everything prepared for them. Each person should be able to pour their own wine and break off their own piece of unleavened bread.

Children were to ask questions and to be taught this night (Ex 12:26-27). The teaching should be done in a way that they can understand. If possible, they should help read, tell, or act out the story of the Exodus and the story of our Savior. Special foods or activities should be arranged so that the children will look forward to this day, rather than regarding it as “a long boring evening.”

The custom of telling personal stories of conversion or other stories of faith on this night fits very well. These show how our Father has individually delivered us from sin. Additional stories about how we had to leave one or more church organizations in order to continue to obey our Father in heaven are also appropriate. Of course, there should also be room to sing praises to our Creator.

In what order should all of these activities be done? That appears to be a complex question. The Jewish solution is a “seder” which means “set order.” Believers with a Jewish background may want to use the format of seder, showing how many of these ancient Jewish practices point to Yeshua (Jesus) as Messiah, and leaving out the few items of pagan origin. However, we see no necessity for other believers to adopt these traditions. The purpose of the evening should be to teach the most truth possible in a way that those attending will be most comfortable with. We offer this brief outline as merely a suggestion. (See the previous page for more ideas.)

- 1) Open the evening with a prayer, followed by a song and/or Bible readings to set the tone.

- 2) Eating a small amount bitter herbs for a reminder of what sin does. (The Hebrew is not specific—you can use almost anything edible but bitter: radish tops, mustard greens, parsley, etc.)
- 3) The main meal.
- 4) The reading, telling, or acting out of the exodus and the sacrifice of our Savior.
- 5) Partaking of bread and wine.
- 6) Stories of coming out from sin.
- 7) Dessert, more singing and a closing prayer.

Obviously, some groups will find need of many additions or changes, but we hope the above ideas help. Groups that do not do foot-washing on the previous night, may wish to include it in this night—but we feel that foot-washing belongs with the Scriptures typically read in the Memorial Service. It seems difficult to compress all of the lessons we describe here for both nights into a single night.

In order to share a meal and have everyone participate in the telling of stories and experiences, the group cannot be too large. The Jewish tradition was 10 to 20 people. If a group is larger than forty people, it will be very difficult to maintain a central focus for the entire group.

Bread and Wine Each Sabbath?

If we understand that 1 Corinthians 11 teaches us to partake of bread and wine whenever we come together as a congregation, we naturally ask “how should that be implemented?” Our first advice is: “Go slow.” The purpose of it is to show that “...we, though many, are one bread and one body” (1Cor 10:16-17). How can it help us be one body if a large number of people in your congregation are opposed to the practice?

We must realize that partaking of bread and wine each week will remind some people of a false church from which they had to leave. They will need much prayer and study before they will be able to participate in such a practice. But would it be sin for people convinced of the need of weekly bread and wine to not have it at services? Listen to the apostle Paul: “It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (Rom 14:21). Brethren who desire to take bread and

wine each Sabbath can do so at home—possibly with a few friends—and not offend the rest of the brethren.

We will put the details of taking weekly bread and wine in another article—this one is already quite long. We began the subject in this article because it was essential for the understanding showing why 1 Corinthians 11 does not apply specifically to the Passover. Also, understanding 1 Corinthians 11 should help people realize that using bread and wine in a religious observance more than once per year is acceptable.

Conclusion

We thank everyone who has read this entire article. This represents the summary our understanding of Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread. In essence, the practice of most “Church of God” groups has not been too far off on these days, but some of the terminology and “reasons” why have been wrong. We will all have to be patient with each other as we grow and learn—realizing that we do not all grow at the same rate.

There are many other relevant points that could be raised and questions that could be answered. We hope that no one will give up and say that the situation is too confusing to reach any conclusion at all! Even David, “a man after God’s own heart,” had to pray: “Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day” (Ps 25:4-5).

—Norman S. Edwards

Thank You

We would like to thank all of the people who made phone calls or sent Passover papers to *Servants' News*. Many were used in preparation of this article.

We would also like to thank the Eternal for giving some of the key points of understanding that we have not seen in any previous writing. Nevertheless, we do not mean that this writing is in any way infallible. We do not know of any other paper that better explains this subject. However, Matthew 13:17 and other verses quoted in this article show that people can be righteous and used by the Eternal, but **not have** a perfect understanding!

Is Christianity True?

by Eric V. Snow

- ☞ *Is the New Testament Historically Reliable?*
- ☞ *Did Paganism Influence First Century Christianity?*
- ☞ *How do you know miracles can happen?*
- ☞ *Can we prove Jesus really walked the Earth?*
- ☞ *How do you know if the Bible is God's word?*
- ☞ *How do you know if God exists?*

Many who have been Christians for years have become disillusioned by questions like those above because they did not have the answers for them. Often these people end up leaving Christianity. Atheists often pose these questions to Christians. Are you ready to answer them? A Jew might ask, "Why should I believe in the New Testament?" Could you give rational reasons to believe in it? Suppose somebody said, "First century Christianity was influenced by pagan religions and philosophy." Could you refute him? Peter said we should be able to answer questions about our faith: "Always being ready to make a defense [gr., apologetic] to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15).

These kind of questions are dealt with by apologetics, which means to defend the faith. "Apologetics" comes from the Greek word that means "fit for defense." It doesn't mean you're sorry or making excuses for your belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Because the general subject is so broad, just two major attacks against Christianity will be covered. Whether the New Testament [NT] is historically reliable and whether those who wrote it were influenced by pagan mystery religions of the Roman empire.

Based on History, NOT Myths

Christianity is different from most religions as it is based on historical facts, which are subject to historical investigation and confirmation. The NT is primarily a historical book and is not a collection of myths, such as the Hindu holy book the Bhagavad-Gita — which isn't taken literally even by most believers in it.

The Bibliographical Test

The military historian, C. Sanders,

devised a three part test when investigating any historical document to determine whether it was reliable. One of these tests is the bibliographical test, which judges an ancient historical document to be more reliable if many copies of the manuscript exist. A second test maintains the smaller the time gap between the first copy of the document and the first surviving copy, the more reliable it is because there is less time for scribal errors to creep into the preserved text. By these two standards the NT is the best attested ancient historical writing in existence. Some 24,633 known copies (including fragments, etc.) exist of it, 5,309 of these being in Greek. By contrast, the document with the next highest number of copies, outside the Hebrew Old Testament [OT] (which has over 1700 copies), is Homer's Iliad, with 643. Other historical writings by prominent ancient historians have far fewer copies: Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, 8; Herodotus, The Histories, 8; Julius Caesar, Gallic Wars, 10.

Furthermore, the time gap between the earliest preserved copies and the autograph, or first manuscript, is much smaller for the NT than these works. For the NT, the gap is about 90 years or less, since most of it was first written before 70 A.D. Scholar, John A. T. Robertson, in "Redating the New Testament", has maintained that every NT book was written before 70 A.D., including John and Revelation. Dates that place the writing of the NT in the second century have been generally discredited by scholars in recent decades. A fragment of John, dated to 125 A.D., is traditionally cited as the earliest copy known of any part of the NT. However, nine fragments of the NT were found in 1972 in a cave by the Dead Sea. Among these fragments, part of Mark was dated to

around 50 A.D., Luke 57 A.D., and Acts from 66 A.D. The earliest major manuscripts, such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are dated to 325-350 A.D. and 350 A.D. respectively.

By contrast, the time gap is much larger for the pagan works mentioned above. For Homer, the gap is 500 years (900 B.C. for the original writing, 400 B.C. for the first copy). For Caesar, it's 900-1000 years, Herodotus, 1300 years and Thucydides, 1300 years. Hence, the NT can be objectively judged more reliable than these pagan historical works both by having a much smaller time gap between when it was written and the first preserved copies, and in the number of ancient handwritten copies.

The Science of Textual Criticism

Skeptics can throw out some frightening figure, and say "There are 200,000 variations in the NT," and create doubts in Christians. However, we can have certainty that the scribes preserved the NT accurately by using the principles of the science of textual criticism. Most of variations between the manuscripts can be ruled out using this test. Most of these "200,000 variations" are spelling mistakes, homophones (such as in English, "two," "too," "to"), words accidentally repeated twice by scribes, etc. For example, if the same word is misspelled 3,000 times, that counts for 3,000 variations. Once one realizes this, the number of significant variations takes a huge downward plunge.

Scholar, Ezra Abbott, maintained 19/20ths of NT variations have so little support that they can be automatically ruled out. Scholars Geisler and Nix, building upon the work of F. J. A. Hort, said only about 1/8 have weight, with 1/60 being "substantial variations." Furthermore, the number of variations is high precisely because so many ancient manuscripts of the NT exist, allowing for more mistakes. This also allows a greater ability to detect and eliminate those mistakes, unlike the case for Caesar's "Gallic Wars" with its mere 10 copies. Scholar Philip Schaff said only 400 of all the 150,000 variations he knew to exist caused doubt on textual

meaning, with 50 being of great significance. Even then, he said no variation altered "an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of scripture teaching."

How We Can Be Certain

Christians should have no doubts on the canon of the NT, meaning which books should be in it and which ones shouldn't be. The quality of the apocryphal (so-called "missing") books, such as "The Gospel of Peter," "The Gospel of Thomas," and "The Shepherd of Hermas," is so much lower and/or their teachings at such variance with the canonical books that they can be eliminated from consideration easily. As M. R. James commented in *The Apocryphal New Testament*: "There is no question of any one's having excluded them from the New Testament: They have done that for themselves." In evident reaction against the heretic Marcion's (c. 140 A.D.) attempt to edit the canon, lists of the canonical books were made in the late second century onwards. These lists, which even from the beginning, contain most of the books we find in the NT today, were made by the author of the Muratorian fragment (170 A.D.), Irenaeus (180 A.D.), and Clement (190 A.D.).

Furthermore, despite its claims to the contrary, the Roman Catholic Church did not choose the canon, and then impose it from the top down. The Sunday-observing Church before the time of emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) was not a tightly controlled, highly organized, monolithic group, and had suffered terrible persecution itself during the rule of Diocletian and earlier emperors. The canon came from the traditional practices of average members and elders—from the bottom up. As scholar Kurt Aland noted: "It goes without saying that the Church, understood as the entire body of believers, created the canon.... it was not the reverse; it was not imposed from the top, be it by bishops or synods."

Other Historical Information

The external evidence test, the second of Sanders' approach to analyzing historical documents, consists of seeing whether statements made in a historical document correlates with other evi-

dence, such as that found by archeology or in other historical writings. The best story about this concerns the great English archeologist, Sir William Ramsay. He had been totally skeptical about the accuracy of the NT, especially the writings of Luke. After going to what is now Turkey, and doing a topographical study, he was forced to totally change his mind. Later, he wrote that Luke "should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." He had believed, as per nineteenth century German higher criticism, that Acts was written in the second century. But he found it must have been written earlier, because it reflected conditions typical of the second half of the first century.

Others had doubted the existence of Pontius Pilate, who had Jesus crucified in 31 A.D., and who was mentioned only in the NT and by a few other Roman and Jewish sources. But in 1961, an archeological expedition from Italy was digging in the ruins of Caesarea's ancient Roman theater. One workman turned over a stone stairway—and found an inscription to Pontius Pilate on the bottom. This case illustrates a principle that disbelievers in the Bible use time and time again. They argue from silence, and say that because something mentioned in the OT or NT is mentioned nowhere else, it can't be true. Many such claims have been repeatedly refuted by archeological discoveries made later. The NT (and OT) have shown themselves trustworthy so often in what can be checked, that we can properly infer that the rest of what cannot be checked is also reliable.

Influenced by Paganism?

We now turn to the question of whether first century Christianity was influenced by paganism. We face the raw fact that such charges are dead issues among contemporary scholars in the fields of classics and Biblical studies. Seeing parallels between the ideas of Gnosticism or Mithraism and Christianity were common in the period from about 1890 to 1940, but are rarely circulated today except by the uninformed. Hence, when H.G. Wells saw parallels between the language used by Paul about the crucifixion and Mithraism in his history of the world, "The Outline of History", that book, which was first published just after WWI, reflected its day and age.

Ignoring Chronology

In order to press the charge first century Christianity was influenced by ancient pagan religions, normally chronology gets ignored. Mithraism, for example, had very little presence within the Roman Empire in the first century, and so for that reason alone it simply could not have been a major influence on early Christianity's development. Scholar M. J. Vermaseren has stated: "No Mithraic monument can be dated earlier than the end of the first century A.D." No images of this god were found in Pompeii—buried by Vesuvius in 79 A.D. A standard technique of skeptics is to place something done by a pagan religion in a later century, to the first century and say it influenced the first century church. An example is communion (the Passover ceremony) which was similar to Mithraism's ceremonial meals. They will take an inscription dated from 376 A.D. that said, in Latin, "reborn for eternity in the taurobolium and criobolium," and say these pagan ceremonies that sacrificed bulls and sheep influenced first century Christianity's idea of spiritual begettal. By this time the pagans could have easily gotten the idea from Christianity instead!

The Need to be Specific

Furthermore, once one becomes highly specific about the legends in question, the apparent similarities to Christianity vanish. For example, in the mystery religion of "Cybele and Attus", Attus comes alive after dying. To call this a "resurrection" is to apply Christian terminology in order to force an analogy. In the legend, Attus' body was preserved, his hair would grow, and a finger would move—and that was it. In another version of the myth, he became an evergreen tree. While one can find other "savior gods" in pagan religions, one discovers upon closer examination that only in Christianity was the death of God for other people, that it was for sin, that it was once for all, and that it was an actual event in history, not a myth..

Or, consider the ceremony in which a bull would be killed on top of a pit which had boards covering it. The pagan believers would be below, and move around to try to get the blood from it to drip on them. To label this a "blood baptism" ignores how this ceremony, called the taurobolium, was not an initiation rite for new believers. It was something

done repeatedly by the same individuals, unlike baptism in Christianity—which immerses the believer in water only once and does not splatter blood on the believer.

Significant Differences

A number of differences existed between the mystery religions and Christianity. The mystery religions, as well as Gnosticism, attempted to have special, secret knowledge known only to a few initiates of the "truth." In contrast, Christianity sought to publicly proclaim "Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2) and His message to the world. To everyone, whether they believed or not. Christianity maintained there was only one way to salvation (Acts 4:12; John 14:6), and so believed in exclusivity. Believers in pagan religions did not care how many gods they or others worshipped. Most of these religions (Mithraism being the exception) had notions of "resurrections" that were tied to a cyclical view of nature and of history. This was arrived at by looking at the birth, death, and rebirth of vegetation from spring to winter and back again.

By contrast, Christianity emphatically believes in a linear view of time and history, because God created the world at a specific time in the past, and because Jesus died "once for all." Christianity also has a much stronger ethical, moral, and intellectual aspect than most mystery religions. Who can deny the demanding and majestic sweep of Christian ethics as proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount, the Letter of James, the "Love Chapter" of I Cor. 13? The idea of salvation in paganism did not involve a moral change or moral duties or deliverance from sin, while Christianity's idea of it involved all three. It is for reasons such as these, against the charge Paul created a mystery religion on a Jewish base, that historian of philosophy Gordon Clark said: "Such surmises are not so much bad scholarship as prejudiced irresponsibility."

Similarities Do Not Prove Dependence

German scholar, Adolf von Harnack, made an excellent summary statement against the idea that Christianity was influenced by pagan mystery religions, which is worth quoting at length: "We must reject the com-

parative mythology which finds a causal connection between everything and everything else, which tears down solid barriers, bridges chasms as though it were child's play, and spins combinations from superficial similarities. . . . By such methods one can turn Christ into a sun god in the twinkling of an eye, or one can bring up the legends attending the birth of every conceivable god, or one can catch all sorts of mythological doves to keep company with the baptismal dove; and find any number of celebrated asses to follow the ass on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem; and thus, with the magic wand of 'comparative religion,' triumphantly eliminate every spontaneous trait in any religion." In short, similarities do not prove causal influence; just because true and false religions have some similar ideas, it does not mean that the true got them from the false. This is especially true when the specifics of the pagan myths are compared to the New Testament doctrines.

Reasons for Faith

"Early in 1926 the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the gospels was really surprisingly good. 'Rum thing,' he went on. 'All that stuff of Frazer's [the author of "The Golden Bough"] about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had happened once.'" These comments made to C.S. Lewis were the straw that broke the camel's back of his unbelief, directly leading to him embracing Christianity. He knew the implications of the historical accuracy of the Gospels for his past atheism, and he saw the apparent similarities between certain pagan ideas and Christianity's as reason to believe, not to deny. Similarly, we should remember that the evidence for the New Testament's historical reliability and for its lack of connection to pagan mystery religion is very strong, and has only been briefly touched here.

May we remember that Jesus is the Messiah, that those who deny Him as Savior cannot be saved (Matt. 10:33): "But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."

Two Highly Recommended Books:
Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *He*

Walked Among Us: Evidence for the Historical Jesus, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993)

Ronald Nash, *The Gospel and the Greeks—Did the New Testament Borrow From Pagan Thought?* (Richardson, Texas: Probe Books, 1992).

For Further Reading

Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982).

F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1960); *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988).

Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989) [This work is by a secular historian, and not a believer in the Messiah].

Stanley Jaki, *The Savior of Science* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1988).

Jehovah's Witnesses, *The Bible: God's Word or Man's?* (New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1989).


C.S. Lewis, Walter Hooper, ed., *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970).

Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988).

Josh McDowell, *More than a Carpenter: Evidence That Demands a Verdict Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), vol 1; *The Resurrection Factor* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1981); **with Don Stewart, *Answers to Tough Questions*** (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1986).

Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958).

Henry M. Morris and Henry M. Morris, III, *Many Infallible Proofs: Evidences for the Christian Faith* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1996).

R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984). [Warning!—only for the determined reader!] 

“Common Law” from page 11
this status.)

RESPONSE: This is a case where man’s laws sound better than the Eternal’s laws until we look at what actually happens. Are most rapists today punished and their victims compensated? No. I have seen studies that estimate that less than 5% are. The vast majority of rape cases are never reported because the rapist knows the victim and will claim in court that she wanted to do it. If there are no witnesses, it is one person’s word against the other. The woman is usually asked all sorts of embarrassing questions about exactly what happened and her personal sexual practices. Of the women who go through the trial experience, many remark that the trial was worse than the rape. If the courts change evidence rules to make it much easier for women, the number of false rape cases will get worse than it is now.

The Eternal had the wisdom to see that it was not practical for men to try to sort out such cases in court. So he eliminated the need to determine whether it was a rape or a mutual act and he said the man should pay the bride price no matter what (Deut 22:29). If the man could not pay, he would be sold as a slave (Ex 22:3). The woman’s father could determine whether or not a marriage would take place. The important lesson for women is that they should never be alone with a man who they do not completely trust.

It is also important to realize that the Eternal gave other laws that would stop violent rapists. If a man breaks into a house, a woman need not determine what his intentions are—even if he is only a thief, she can kill him and receive no punishment (Ex 22:2). If a man kidnaps a woman (makes her go where she does not want to) he should be put to death (Deut 24:7) If a man injures another through violence, he must pay for the loss of time and healing.

I am glad you brought up the case of Jewish law not protecting the rights of divorced women and widows. While there are many things that Believers can learn about the Law from the Jews, you have found a good case where Jewish interpretation is wrong. When the scriptures are silent on the issue, a judgment should be made. “Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow” (Deut 27:19). Also, “if there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges

may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows” (Deut 25:1-2).

Because the law says nothing specifically on this issue, does not mean that nothing should be done. If the divorced or widowed woman were living with another relative, then the man should probably be dealt with as if she were a daughter. If the rape occurred in an Inn that she ran by herself and she was known to work as a prostitute, then indeed nothing might be done. There are other possible cases, but that would be the job of the judges to determine. The Eternal’s laws cover the broad majority of cases and leave the less-frequent cases to hopefully sound judgment.

LETTER CONTINUES:

I’m sure you are not willing to make those concessions to crimes such as those listed above, but you would fully exercise your rights under today’s civil law, so don’t so quickly “write off” the benefits for the spouses involved in a “civil marriage”, over those who are not. If our society, and government would recognize them as equally valid, that would solve one of the problems.

The other problem, is that we live in a wide society, contrasted to the biblical ones. The individual’s conduct was regulated by the community and synagogue, and laws were enacted by the rabbis to punish men for certain types of conduct towards their wives, for which punishment for certain offenses were meted out in the synagogue. They were also inextricably tied to their plots of land which had been handed down throughout their generations, as their source of livelihood. If you marry someone today, who defects from the faith, and skips town (I can give you examples of individuals who have contracted these “in God’s eyes marriages”, and left their partner “high and dry”), the partner is left with no recourse, in cases where monetary or other benefits are due such as medical as well as private or government-

tal pensions, even if the person has been married 1-2-3-decades! Men in those days didn’t “skip” town, leaving their land and livelihood, and their wives fending for themselves as often happens today. And one can’t assume that even though a potential spouse may have good intentions today, that they won’t change in the future. In the past, an Israelite had the disapproval of society, and religious authorities, to face, as a deterrent for misconduct towards his wife, which does not occur today.

Of course, I’m not valuing the civil marriage over the actual covenant made in the presence of the Father with the “God-given” spouse, but until our society recognizes common law marriages as equal to “civil” marriages, it is unwise to suggest that this should be practiced today, and I believe a great disservice to the readership has been done and will be done, if the pros and cons of this issue are not both published.

Enjoyed the article on the marriage contract. That would be like the modern day ketubah [Hebrew name for marriage contract]. In that document, it also listed the obligations of one to another, and also set an exorbitant price the husband had to pay the wife if he ever wanted a divorce, as well as stipulations (if the woman so choose), that the man could not take another wife!!

Gotta run! Would like your comments.
In Messiah,

—Marsha Basner

RESPONSE: We are sorry for the misunderstanding on common law marriages. We realize that, to most people, “common law” means simply living together with no legal arrangement. We definitely believe husbands and wives should do what is necessary to take care of each other in case one should die or give up on the marriage.

—Norman S. Edwards

Ephraim-Manasseh Corrections

In the November, 1996 *Servants’ News*, there are two errors. On page 15, “Contradiction #1” stated Manasseh was the **younger** brother, its should say, Manasseh was the **older** brother. On page 16, the first full paragraph begins “The commonly offered proof that Ephraim is the USA...” It should say: “The commonly offered proof that Ephraim is **Britain**”. Our apologies to Lyle Timmons for these mistakes.

We received several articles giving many more reasons why Britain is Ephraim in prophecy. We plan to run at least one of these articles in *Servants News*.

Publishing or John McCaulley. During the last few months we have become aware that both are now actively promoting the ideas contained in Darrell Conder's book *Mystery Babylon and the Lost Ten Tribes in the End Time*. This book concludes that the Gospels are "totally mythological in origin" (p.148) and denies the existence of any kind of Savior who walked the earth, performed miracles and died for our sins. This book does bring up interesting history and textual issues. The New Testament text is not as certain as many Christians think it is, but it is not anywhere near as bad as Conder presents it. Conder's book has so many half-truths and erroneous conclusions that we do not believe it is of much value. Page 2 contains the following near-blasphemous statement:

I will say that you are going to find in this book a truth that has been effectively hidden from the lost Ten Tribes since the downfall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel over 2500 years ago! However, to make it perfectly clear that the words and statements contained in this book are by no means my own, I can say that I did and do have an all-powerful Ally Who happens to be the Creator of Israel!

An "ally" is someone who works together with you. The Eternal should be our Creator, Ruler, Father and Teacher.

Chapter two of the book goes to great extent to talk about the great variety of versions of early Gospels and the many other gospel-like books that never made it into the canon of Scripture. He makes a great effort to show that they are all unreliable. Yet, later he claims they were all concocted by Simon Magus and his successors to get people away from the true religion. On page 146 he makes the statement:

Into this solution add the historical fact that the church had complete editorial control over the Gospels.

If the church had such great control over all of these writings, why did they create so many completely different gospels? The many accounts of the life of Jesus indicate that there was a story that many people wanted to tell—each as they saw it. We are continually amazed to see Conder put down Bible books for which there are dozens of over-1500-year-old manuscripts, yet accept without question

secular history for which there are only a few manuscripts of much later origin. He spent almost no time justifying the origins of the manuscripts around which he builds his case. Even if we assume all of the history he quotes is accurate, many of his "proofs" just do not make sense. From page 23 we quote, adding numbers in brackets []:

We can further understand the alien authorship of the Gospels by not only citing these additional facts: [1] in Luke 5:19 there is mention of a paralytic who was let down through the tiles of the roof to Jesus. Manfred Barthel writes, "houses with tile roofs were common enough in **Athens and Rome**, but houses in Galilee were simple, one-room structures with a thatch of reeds and hems laid over the rafters. [2] Just as **Mark uses the Roman system of reckoning time**—'the fourth watch of the night'—**Luke uses the Greek system of counting days of the week** when he writes, 'And Jesus came into Capernaum on the second day.' This doesn't mean that he was on the road for two days, but that he arrived on a Monday, which is still called 'the second day' in modern Greek." [3] In a note about Zacharias writing on a tablet in Luke 1:63, Barthel writes: "Whereas a wax tablet (Which could be written on with a pointed stylus and erased by scraping off the top layer of wax) **would have been a common enough household object in Greece, it would have been a rare and expensive luxury in Palestine.**"

Consider these answers to the above:

1) We could go to many third-world countries today where the houses are mostly one-room with thatched roofs. But we will always find some more wealthy people who can afford to imitate the western style houses. We would certainly expect to find wealthy people in first-century Palestine having Roman or Greek-style houses. When our Savior was healing and teaching great crowds, where would it make sense to go, to a one-room hut or someone who had a large Roman-style house? We have examples of our Savior asking for facilities when he needed them (Luke 19:5).

2) In our modern day, we find numerous religious writings that give

dates and times according to the commonly accepted Gregorian calendar of our day. We usually use our standard local time, though shortwave radio and certain other activities may use Greenwich Mean Time. Only for specific religious subjects do we use Biblical calendars or times. Should it be a shock to us that the gospel writers would use some of the date and time systems that were in commercial use in their day?

3) Zacharias was a priest in the temple. If anyone in Jerusalem would have need or access to wax tablets, it would most likely be the priests.

Conder devoted little or no space to the many places there the Gospels do accurately reflect what archeology has discovered about life in first century Palestine. Conder's book is full of other arguments little better than the above one. We cannot cover them all here.

Conder and McCaulley have asked to submit rebuttles to these Servants' News articles, but we do not believe they would be of interest or benefit to enough people. Anyone desiring more information may contact Conder at PO Box 11476, Salt Lake City, Utah 84147-0476. McCaulley's address is PO Box 132, Broomall, PA 19008.

While it is quite easy to get lost in the mass of world religious history, we have been particularly troubled that several brethren have embraced Conder's concept so quickly. **Conder does not believe that we receive the holy spirit from being baptized in the name of Jesus or Yeshua.** When asked what Old Testament scripture they used to show they had the holy spirit, persons embracing this teaching did not have any answers. They do not believe temple sacrifices are necessary to atone for sin. The whole issue of forgiveness from sin and the Eternal's purpose for our lives now is not clearly explained.

One of the reasons that people depart from Christianity is because those who profess it do not exhibit the power that we see in the New Testament. Those of us who believe in the power of the Eternal and His Son, need to pray that His light will shine through us much brighter so that we may reach those who are in doubt.

—Norman S. Edwards

Literature List

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many people who want it at the lowest practical cost. This loose-leaf format is inexpensive and allows this non-copyrighted publication to be easily copied. You might wish to bind it with a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

All items are free. New items are highlighted with shading. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available upon request.

Mature Literature

The Apple of God's Eye by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine, and we often take it for granted.

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

A Call to Arms by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Lessons for today from Revelation 2-3 including the oppressive doctrine of the Nicolaitans and the doctrine of Balaam.

Basic Bible Study Tools by Richard Nickels. 36 pages. An excellent summary of available Bible study aids and how to use them. Samples of many study aids included.

Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

By What Authority? by John A. Duffley, 10 pages. Brief overview of authority and its structure in the New Testament.

Christ's Birth—Hanukkah—and the New Testament Believer by Eric Paschall, 5 pages. Our Messiah was conceived near Hanukkah and born near Tabernacles.

Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law? by Eric V. Snow. 42 pages—revised Jan. 1996. A "must read" for those who feel it does.

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.

The Heart of the Matter by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman S. Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

Just What Does the New Covenant Do? by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Where Is the True Church Today? by Jack M. Lane, 18 pages. How can there be so many similar groups, yet one true church? What is required of members? Read and see.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of church history.

Basic Literature

The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day? (From the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.

Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat "Unclean" Meat in New Testament Times? by Steven M Collins. 14 pages.

Christian Educational Ministries Correspondence Course by Ron Dart. First lesson from SN. Others free from CEM.

God's Purpose for Your Life by Fred McGovarin, 40 pages, half-size booklet. A "first booklet" for people just becoming interested in the Truth. It introduces Hebrew names (Yahweh and Yashua) for God and Jesus.

How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Study of giving and tithing in the Bible.

The Key to the Book of Revelation edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 12-page 9"x4" booklet.

Lazarus and the Rich Man edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact? by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the Bible & resurrection.

Why Do You Observe Sunday? edited by Tom Justus, originally by Herbert Armstrong. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.

Study Resources and Information

ANCHOR Magazine edited by Melvin Rhodes. One free 16 page sample issue. Reaching out to recovering homosexuals.

Barnabas Ministries Mission Statement by Alan Ruth. 2 pages.

The Christian Beacon Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter "for the shared ministry of the Royal Priesthood."

A Church of God Ministry Order Form by Lon Lacey & friends. 1 page. Free literature on nature of God & Satan, Biblical law, prophecy, history, church government, etc.

The Fellowship Commentator by F. Paul Haney. Sample 8 page issue of free quarterly newsletter.

Friends of the Family Lending Library Order Form by Rod McKown, 2 pages. Check out family books and tapes.

Giving and Sharing Order Form by Richard Nickels. 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.

Hebrew Roots Sample 24-page issue of free newsletter with emphasis on the Hebrew roots of "Christian" belief.

History Research Projects Order Form by Craig White. 4 pages. Hard-to-find books on the origins of nations.

The Journal: News of the Churches of God edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 16 pages.

A Living Relationship with Original Language Text Unfolding by John Purvins. First issue of free Christian living magazine and Hebrew-Greek study course, 38 pages.

Living Room Church of God (LRCOG) Directory edited by Robert Bodkin. 8 pages.

Sabbath History edited by Leon Lyell in Australia. One free sample issue of 26-page newsletter about the history of Sabbath keepers & groups. There is nothing else like it.

The Sabbath Sentinel One free sample issue of 16 page glossy magazine—doctrinal & human interest articles. With Bible Sabbath Association order form: Sabbath books & tracts.

Servants' News & Norman Edwards Statement of Receipts and Expenses, 2 pages. (Always sent to contributors.)

The WAY Sample 24-page issue of free quarterly newsletter of doctrinal articles relating to the Biblical way of life.