

The Night to be Much Observed

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Given 26-Mar-94; Sermon #120

I don't know that I've ever heard a sermon on The Night To Be Much Observed. I don't mean a sermon taking place on The Night To Be Much Observed. I mean a sermon about The Night To Be Much Observed. I know that I have given a number of sermonettes on it, from time to time. But this time I thought that I would spend a bit more time researching it, and make my sermonette into sermon length.

I've seen parts of the story, from time to time, in other parts of the Bible; but I never collected it all together. Even in this sermon, I don't think I'm going to collect it all together; but I will hit some things. And I hope that you will see that this night has quite a great deal of significance in God's plan

Exodus 12:40-42 (NKJV) Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

The story appears to have its beginning here, but actually the story begins much further back in history than this. What we are reading of here, is undoubtedly the event that plays the largest single part in its history; but this date has a much broader role than what is shown right here in Exodus 12.

The first thing that has to be established is what day is being spoken of here? It is the 14th, the Passover? Or is the 15th, the first day of Unleavened Bread? This must be established because the chapter very clearly switches back and forth between events that were to occur on the 14th and events that were to occur, or begin, on the 15th.

If you will just hold your finger there, I'll flip back just one page in my Bible and show you what I mean about the context of the chapter just flipping back and forth between Passover and the first day of Unleavened Bread. The chapter very clearly begins instructing us regarding Passover. When you get up to the end of verse 14, without any break at all, it says:

Exodus 12:14-15 So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.

Without any break in the context, he switches from the 14th to the 15th. And, if you are not careful, you might be easily confused about that. Then he goes through giving instructions about

the Feast of Unleavened Bread. When you get to verse 26:

Exodus 12:26-27 And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD.

But just a few verses before that, without any break, he switched from the Days of Unleavened Bread right back to the Passover. It continues like that throughout the chapter. Sometimes the translators have inserted a break, and sometimes they have not. The instruction, then, for one whole day is not completed before the instruction for another day (or the next one) is begun.

I just recently reread a paper that had some effect in producing the change in the Worldwide Church of God—where they changed their teaching of a Passover at the beginning of the 14th to a Passover at the end of the 14th. This paper advocated that the day in question (in Exodus 12, beginning in verse 40) was the 14th. I am going to read you a quote directly from that paper. The beginning of this quote is a quote by the author of the verse.

"It is a night of watching, or vigil, for God and Israel." In that night, you had to eat the lamb in that manner. "And this you shall eat with your loins girded [Now he's quoting Exodus 12:11], your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste."

This manner of eating the Passover meal fits more the description of the night of watching [Do you hear that? He connected the eating of the Passover meal with the "night of watching."], and seems to prepare Israel for the next experiences they were going to be encountered with—mainly spoiling the Egyptians and being thrust or forced out of Egypt.

If they did not eat the lamb in haste, and did not keep a night of watching or vigil, they would not have been ready to spoil their neighbors on a moment's notice. And since the Egyptians had thrust them out of Egypt for fear they all would be dead, the fact that Israel was ready—i.e., dressed and packed—made it possible for them to be thrust in haste out of Egypt with everything they had on.

Another point to remember—after the death angel passed at midnight, it says: "And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians." Israel did not rise up, because they were watching and keeping vigil. It was a night of watching to them.

This person clearly puts the eating of the Passover and the "night of watching" as being part of the same night. But look at verse 43, where it says:

Exodus 12:43 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner [outsider] shall eat it.

Verse 43 might tend to make one think that Passover night is in the context (that is, in verses 40-42), because the instruction in verse 43 is very clearly for Passover. But the Bible is not written like other books that we are familiar with. To the best of my knowledge, when it was written (i.e., by Moses) there was no punctuation or paragraph breaks such as we are familiar

with. Those are much later literary devices. If my memory serves me correctly, things like punctuation did not come along until some time around the 12th or 13th century. These books of the Bible were written long before that. So punctuation and paragraph breaks are later literary devices.

Thus, the paragraph breaks that we see in the Bible have been inserted into modern Bibles by the translators. Now, I am not saying that the translators have done a bad job. On the contrary, I think that it was overwhelmingly good. But sometimes they, and we, are misled. However, I find it hard to find someone 'misled' on these scriptures—because the verses preceding verses 40-42 are clearly about the exodus, and there is no break between them.

But clearly the author of that paper that I quoted from is trying to squeeze the events of two nights into one. That is, the events of killing, roasting, eating, burning the remainder of the lamb, watching, and then leaving Egypt all in one night. That cannot be! Notice the wording here.

Exodus 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day...

Now, notice verse 51. Here we have a verse that is similar to what I was talking about before—where, without even switching gears, God switches from talking about Passover to talking about The Night To Be Much Observed.

Exodus 12:51 And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.

Verse 41 and verse 51 are talking about the same event—when they came out of Egypt. Now look at verse 22.

Exodus 12:22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood...

What's he talking about? What time is he talking about? What event is he talking about? He is talking about the Passover. He is talking about what one does with the blood right after the lamb is killed.

Exodus 12:22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.

One cannot *go out* of Egypt by night and *stay* in his home at one and the same time. You can't "leave" and "stay" at the same time. You can't sit in your house until morning and walk out of Egypt at the same time. You can't do both! The events of Passover and the events of The Night To Be Much Observed (the first day of Unleavened Bread) occurred on two different nights. Let's go to Numbers 28.

Numbers 28:16-17 On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the LORD. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast...

Two different days! There's still a possibility maybe that one might be able to think, "Well,

Passover was at night; and the first day of Unleavened Bread was at night. Maybe they just took place a few hours apart." But, again, remember what we just said. You can't do two things at the same time—*stay* in your house until morning, and *leave* by night.

Let's go to Deuteronomy 16.

Deuteronomy 16:1 "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night."

What did the verse just say? It said that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is on the 15th, Passover is on the 14th—and Deuteronomy 16:1 says that they came out at night. So let's go back to Numbers again, this time in chapter 33.

Numbers 33:1-4 These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD. And these are their journeys according to their starting points: 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. For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.

If we are going to use the thinking of the man whose paper had some influence on that change, then we have the Egyptians burying their dead within an hour or two after God slew them. That sounds pretty callused to me, and awfully quick. "Hurry, get that guy into the ground," sort of thing. That sort of thing just doesn't happen. We find in another place that the Egyptians were wailing their dead all over the place. A great groaning cry was going up for Egypt. These people were not doing what they were doing here—burying their dead—immediately after the people died. They wailed for a day, and then they began to be burying their dead.

There are other things here as well. I don't want to dwell a great deal on that time; but Exodus 12: 40-42 is talking about The Night To Be Much Observed. It is not talking about the Passover night. And there is a reason why God did what He did. He has established two different festivals. The first festival, Passover on the 14th, begins in the evening part of the 14th. That is, at the beginning of it—beginning with the killing of the lamb.

The killing of the lamb has a specific focus, and that focus is on the death of the Savior—that we have a part in the death of the Savior. Its next focus—in the eating of the lamb—emphasizes the more important continuance of the relationship. So when you ingest, you receive energy and your life is sustained. That is the symbolism. And so we have the Passover concentrating on those two factors. (1) The killing of the lamb, all of us have had a part in that. (2) The eating of the lamb, which emphasizes the continuance of the relationship.

Now, the 15th—the going out—emphasizes the action required to keep the relationship going and growing. That's our part. We have to get up. We have to do something. We have to leave Egypt. We have to leave sin. And I just want to remind you that we are dealing with two

different festivals—with two altogether different "focuses." And I mentioned earlier that this date has a much longer history than the exodus, because the Bible records another very significant event in the history of Israel that occurred on it. Back to Exodus 12 again, and notice verses 40-41 once more.

Exodus 12:40-41 Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on the very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

This time, as we look closely at this verse, our attention is going to be on the 430 years. Is there anywhere else in the Bible where 430 years is involved? Yes, there is. Let's go back to the book of Genesis, where we will see the real roots of this date. (Genesis 15—almost the beginning of the Book.) The chapter begins with Abraham being very concerned that he doesn't have anyone that is of his own family, of his own body, to inherit the promises that God had given to him. And, in verse 2, Abraham asks God about it.

Genesis 15:2-4 But Abram said, "LORD GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house [a servant] is my heir!" And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Then God took him outside and made him look in every direction. Then God promised Abram that he would inherit it. But Abram wanted a little bit of proof. And so he says, "God, how will I know that I'm going to inherit it?" And so then God enters into a covenant with him. We find that described, beginning in verse 9; but we'll pick it up beginning in verse 13.

Genesis 15:13-16 The He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

In verse 17, we find the completion of that.

Genesis 15:18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.

And so God then entered into that agreement with him. And it's interesting to notice something here—and that is God's foresight. And, I might add here, also His plan. Remember that Abraham didn't have a child yet. But already God is planning a discipline that He is going to put the descendants of Abraham [through], in which they would be subject to others. But also planned was their release from that subjugation, the destruction of the Amorites under Joshua,

and the inheritance of the Land. What God is showing is that the events of the exodus were part of a much larger plan, which God inaugurated through Abraham and then continued through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. So let's go to chapter 17, where the real covenant was made with Abram.

Genesis 17:1-4, 8-11 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations... Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." [Now it is an eternal inheritance that is to be given.] And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."

Let's drop down to verse 23. Look at the language here.

Genesis 17:23-26 So Abraham [his name now changed] took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael.

Now let's jump, in the story here, to Exodus 19. We have gone from Exodus 12:40-41 with an emphasis on the 430 years, and underlining that is the language "that very same day." Then we jump back to Genesis 15 and pick up a promise which God sealed with a covenant that He would give to Abraham heirs from his own body to inherit the land. In chapter 17, we see the covenant given to Abraham. And now it is made an eternal covenant—an eternal inheritance of the land. And we find that sealed by circumcision—and, again, with language talking about the self-same day. In Exodus 19, the children of Israel are out of the land, and God is about to make the covenant with them—with the descendants of Abraham.

Exodus 19:1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.

It certainly cannot be the same *date* that occurred three months earlier—when they came out of Egypt. I think that what he means is, exactly three months later they made it to the area of Sinai. The language has a similarity to it; and I think that one of the reasons for the similarity is that God wants to draw our attention to what is being done. And what is being done is God is entering into another covenant—this time with Abraham's descendants. The covenant then is

proposed. Israel accepts. And in Exodus 24, the covenant is sealed by blood.

Exodus 24:7-8 Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

So, the covenant was now ratified by the blood of an animal. Next, we are going to go to the book of Acts, because I think this helps to gather everything together. What we are going to do here is to look at a small portion of Stephen's account of what we just read.

Acts 7:2-8 And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. [Genesis 15] That's where Stephen got that.] But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years. 'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.' Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision [Genesis 17]; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

And then we have the story of how Israel got into Egypt. Joseph was sold there; and then a famine came into the land, and that famine drove Jacob and his sons down there. In verse 13, Joseph had to be revealed to his brothers. Here he was—second in command—the Prime Minister of all Egypt.

Acts 7:14-15 Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people. So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.

Let's add one more scripture—this time in the book of Galatians.

Galatians 3:15-17 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

I emphasized *the 430 years*. Four hundred and thirty years after the covenant God made with Abraham—the law came. We understand that it was already in existence; but it was given to Israel in a codified form as a portion of the covenant that God made with him.

Now listen! The real beginning of the Old Testament church was not at Mt. Sinai, but in the land of inheritance where Abraham pitched his tent 430 years earlier. The Old Testament church began with Abraham. And (if I can inject something here) the New Testament church, in that sense, also began at the same time—because Abraham is *the father of the faithful*. Are you beginning to pull the pieces together of *how important a date* the 15th day of Nisan is?

We understand that the real, true, beginning (if I can put it that way) of the New Testament church was on the day of Pentecost—when God gave His Spirit. But what I am reaching back to is the very roots of that event! And that event took place, we now know (because of combining Exodus 12: 40-41, with Genesis 17, with Galatians 3) that those events all took place on *the same date*—430 years apart. So the real beginning of the Old Testament church was not at Sinai; but in the land of inheritance, where Abraham pitched his tent 430 years earlier. And from that small beginning (beginning with Abraham and Sarah) came Isaac and Rebecca, and then Jacob and his wives and children, the selling of Joseph into Egypt. Then the famine drove Jacob down into Egypt along with all of his relatives (75 of them), where they grew into a sizable nation—subjugated by the Egyptians. That is, a nation of about 2 ½ million people. Then came the raising up of Moses, the destruction of Egypt culminating in the slaying of the firstborn on the 14th of the first month. And then the climax—the children of Israel leaving Egypt 430 years to the day that God entered into the covenant with Abraham!

On that very day Abraham, Ishmael, and all the males of Abraham's household were circumcised; and thus they received the sign of the covenant. The covenant that was made at Mt. Sinai was essentially the same covenant as that entered into by God and Abraham, but expanded to include the entire nation (that is, all the descendants of Abraham). And added to it, then, were civil and ceremonial laws necessary for administering the covenant to the whole nation. That makes the 15th of Nisan (or, if you prefer, Abib) a very significant date.

So let's go back to Exodus 12 again. This time we are going to emphasize something else.

Exodus 12: 40-42 Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

I want you to just sit back and listen as I read these verses from a variety of translations. I want you to see how much "leeway" (you might say) there is in the words; and yet, at the same time, help you to see that, even though there is some difference here, they really clarify what is going on in these verses.

The first one is from "The Living Bible."

Exodus 12:40-42 (The Living Bible) The sons of Jacob and their descendants had lived in Egypt 430 years, and it was on the last day of the 430th year that all of Jehovah's people left the land. This night was selected by the Lord to bring his people out from the land of Egypt; so the same night was selected as the date of the annual celebration of God's deliverance.

That's beautiful. Now, "The Revised English Bible."

Exodus 12:40-42 (Revised English Bible) The Israelites had been settled in Egypt for 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the tribes of the LORD came out of Egypt. This was the night when the LORD kept vigil to bring them out of Egypt. It is the LORD's night—a vigil for all Israelite generations, generation after generation.

"The Amplified Bible: "

Exodus 12:40-42 (Amplified Bible) Now the time the Israelites dwelt in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, even that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out of Egypt. It was a night of watching unto the Lord and to be much observed for bringing them out of Egypt; this same night of watching unto the Lord is to be observed by all the Israelites throughout their generations.

"The New International Version: "

Exodus 12:40-42 (New International Version) Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt. Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come.

Now, just the last verse from, "Moffatt: "

Exodus 12:42 (Moffatt) It was a night when the Eternal was on the watch, to bring them out of Egypt; a night when all Israelites must watch for the Eternal, age after age.

Are you watching for God?

From Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: [This night is] *"a preservation-night of the Lord, to bring them out of the land of Egypt... This same night is (consecrated) to the Lord as a preservation for all children of Israel in their families."* And finally, just a one-line comment from Adam Clarke: [It is] *"a night to be held in everlasting remembrance."*

I think, in collating these verses from these various translations, that Israel was to keep The Night To Be Much Observed, at least in part, as a night of watching—of *watchful vigil*—in order to commemorate the reason they were able to leave Egypt so easily. The reason that they were able to leave Egypt so easily was because *God was watching over them* as His plan

unfolded. If you put together Genesis 15 with the story in Exodus, you can begin to see how God was watching over them. He had this plan. Their being in Egypt as a slave [people] was a discipline for them so that, when they would come out of there, they would be prepared to go through the wilderness—and then prepared for taking over the land. That was God's plan; and so God watched over it, to bring it to its completion. But it's not done yet, because *you* are a part of that plan now. Remember that we saw in Genesis 17 that now it has eternal consequences, and it is still in operation. This is a big day that we are celebrating here.

Is anyone going to deny that because God saw the blood on the door pillars and passed over those houses that He was watching out for them? Is anyone going to deny that He was watching over them as they finished spoiling the Egyptians during the daylight part of the 14th and as they gathered to meet there in Rameses? How closely was He watching? Here's just one little indication of how closely He was watching. And I want you to understand that this word watching watching does not mean that He was just passively observing them as they left. No, it means that He was *guarding* them. He was actively involved in it.

Let me give you the meaning of that word, "watched." It comes from the Hebrew *shamar*; and it is used in many, many places. It's used, or translated into the word *keep* 283 times. Whenever you want to "keep" something, you preserve it—don't you? You actively put it into a place where it will be guarded and protected. This is what this word means. God was watching, keeping, guarding, protecting, preserving. All of those words, incidentally, are used in the Bible as translations of this word. It means, "*to keep, to have charge of, guard, watch, and ward, protect, save life, retain, treasure up, keep within bounds, restrain, celebrate, abstain...*" We could go on and on. It has quite a number of applications.

Look at Exodus 11:7. To me this is kind of illustrative. It says there:

Exodus 11:7 But against none of the children of Israel [talking about when they leave Egypt] shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast.

You know how excitable dogs are. They protect their territory. We have a dog next-door to us. It's a female boxer. And it has the strangest bark you ever heard in all your life. It sounds like it has a sore throat all the time—real gravelly. But you cannot set foot in our yard without that dog barking. Sure, it's the next door neighbor's dog; but if you come into our place, all you have to do is step onto the driveway and that dog is right there, barking at you. That's the nature of dogs.

Dogs bark. They protect their territory. But God was watching so closely that, on the night of the Passover (and I'm sure it carried over into The Night To Be Much Observed) not even a dog barked as Israel left Egypt. Can you imagine the din of a couple million people going along the road in their wagons (or whatever it was that they had) or walking, pans jingling, their animals going by—and the dogs don't even bark! I mean, the Egyptians' dogs. Did you notice what the rest of the verse said?

Exodus 11:7 ...that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

Was God watching, or what? Is anyone going to deny that God was not watching them as they walked out that night of the 15th—in the very sight of the Egyptians, who were burying their dead? There is every possibility that when something like this would occur that the Egyptians would want to blame the Israelites for the death of their children—their sons, their daughters—and their animals. And they would be enraged that the Israelites were the cause. They couldn't see where God was. They couldn't blame Him directly, as it were; but they would take it out on His servants, His people. But they stood numbly by, instead of resisting or fighting, and went about burying their dead as the Israelites left Egypt. Perhaps under normal circumstances the Egyptians would have fought over the sense of loss of their loved ones.

Exodus 13:21-22 The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

We see here a visible sign that God was with them—watching them, observing them. In chapter 14 we have the occurrence where Israel was trapped at the Red Sea, and we find here:

Exodus 14:19-20 And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.

The Night To Be Much Observed is *the official marking of God's watchful care*. It is good, it is right, that we celebrate what God did and does. I think that we can easily see that this portion of the holy day is of great significance—not just on the basis of its previous history, but now on the basis of its historical occurrence in reference to the exodus. A whole nation of slaves just got up and, without having to lift a hand to effect their liberty—they walked away.

I wonder if you know of anything else like that? I mean of similar consequence that ever occurred in like manner in the history of this world? Most people, in order to win their liberty, must undergo a bloody warfare; and many people lose their lives. Those who do not suffer the loss of life, usually suffer the loss of much material wealth. Israel didn't lose any lives. And Israel came away rich! In this case, the captor nation was helpless to do anything to restrain the slaves—because the Egyptians were restrained by God.

Perhaps we have no feeling for how important slaves are to the economy of nations. I have what is, to me, an interesting comment from the book, "My Glorious Brothers," by Howard Fast. This is taken from page 272 in the paperback version. "My Glorious Brothers" is the story of the Maccabean revolt. It's not really a true history. It's the kind of book that James Michener writes. It's a historical novel, where words are put into the main character's mouths as though they were recorded. But this is the story of the Maccabean revolt by the Jews against the Greek Syrians.

Overall, that revolt lasted for 26 years. We only know of maybe 3 or 4 of those years, which lead up to the cleansing of the temple. But there was a long protracted struggle, and it wasn't

always "the Maccabean Revolt." They [the Maccabean brothers] were, more or less, late comers in the revolts that were going on. But it took a terrible toll, especially on the Greeks. Not so much on the Jews, but it took a terrible toll on the Greeks.

In the last chapter of this book, the author is explaining why the Greeks (who had lost so much in the way of manpower) were willing to continue to fight for so long for what they considered to be theirs. And what they considered to be theirs was Palestine and its Jewish people. The way that this is told is that the author, Howard Fast, puts his thoughts (his ideas) into the mouth of a Roman legate. This man had been sent by the Senate in Rome to go spy out what was happening in Judea, because they knew that the Greeks had been defeated. But Judea was too important a piece of land to allow the Jews to be in control of it. That's basically the approach that Rome took. And, therefore, Rome was beginning to move into the vacuum that was created by the defeat of the Greeks by the Jews.

What was happening was that this Roman legate was writing his reports back to the Senate there in Rome, and telling them what his findings were. Mostly he was analyzing the mind, the attitude, the character, the personality of the Jews. Now listen to this, because there's a very interesting comment regarding slavery.

"For one thing, the antipathy toward these people [Antipathy is a hatred. And this man is conceding that everybody around the area hated the Jews.] must be reckoned with. Their notions of freedom, their whole concept of what one may best call 'the rights of individuals' are a threat to freemen everywhere and to our [Rome's] entire slave structure. As with us, the peoples here about recognize slavery as the basis of freedom; since it is only in those societies which wrest upon the firm foundation of slavery that free citizens are able to advance civilization."

Do you see the thinking? Who's "free" and who's "a slave" in the eyes of the Roman? A small oligarchy in Rome was free. Everybody else worked for them.

When Israel left Egypt, Egypt collapsed. It never again rose to the height of being a great nation. Indeed, it was prophesied in the Bible to become the basest of nations. They collapsed because the basis of their wealth—the slaves—left. And the same thing happened, on a smaller scale, in the United States in the aftermath of the Civil War. A major reason why the South had such a difficult time recovering from the Civil War was because it lost a major portion of its wealth—the slaves!

The slaves literally were the only ones who knew how to do everything. And the landowners could not survive without the slaves, because the slaves knew how to plant. They did the planting. The slaves kept the books. The slaves kept the house. The slaves did everything! They were the ones who had the skills. And the free men dissipated.

That's what happened to Egypt. And what God is telling us, spiritually, is that Satan's whole system—spiritual Egypt, or Babylon (if you want to call it that)—is supported and sustained by man's slavery to him. And his system will collapse too when that slavery ends. Satan knows it, and he fights to preserve what he feels is his. And so, too, we are able to walk away from that

slavery only because God keeps vigil. He watches over us, and observes us, keeps us, guards us, protects us; and Satan has to stand helplessly by and watch his "slaves" leave.

Some day in the near future, the church is going to walk away from this system and be in a place of safety. And Satan's whole house of confusion and deception—built on *spiritual slavery*—will collapse. What happened in Egypt is a physical 'type' of what's going to happen—only it's going to be much greater, because the whole world is going to be involved this time. And this is what God wants us to remember—to observe—that *WE come out because HE keeps vigil*.

There is one more thing that I want to add to this. But it's an important part of The Night To Be Much Observed and focuses on Deuteronomy 16. It also includes some things that are in the New Testament.

Deuteronomy 16:1 "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

Now, that ought to give you a clue as to what this context is about. It's about coming out. It's not about Passover night. It's about The Night To Be Much Observed. There's no date here. But anybody who understands the context of Exodus 12, and in other places, can begin to understand that the instruction here is not in regard to Passover per se. It is in regard to the Passover season; but it is in regards specifically to the Days of Unleavened Bread, and most specifically to The Night To Be Much Observed.

Deuteronomy 16:2 Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd...

This cannot be Passover, because you do not sacrifice the Passover sacrifice itself "from the flock and the herd." It had to be a kid of the goats or a sheep—not from the herd, not from the cows. He is talking about something that was sacrificed on the first day of Unleavened Bread.

Deuteronomy 16:3 You shall eat no leavened bread with it [with that sacrifice]; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

We are talking about the first day of Unleavened Bread—not Passover.

Deuteronomy 16:4 And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the meat which you sacrificed the first day at twilight...

When was this sacrifice made, brethren? At the beginning of the 15th day, not at the beginning of the 14th day—at *ba erev*. That makes it very certain that it was the first day of Unleavened Bread.

Deuteronomy 16:5 You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates...

Hey, wait a minute here. Where was the Passover supposed to be sacrificed? *At home!* But this sacrifice was not to be done within their gates. This was a sacrifice that had to be sacrificed elsewhere.

Deuteronomy 16:6 But at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight [This is *ba erev*. When is that?], at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt.

Did they come out on the 14th or the 15th? They came out on the 15th.

Deuteronomy 16:7 And you shall [boil]...

Not 'roast,' which is mistranslated there. Were you allowed to boil the sacrifice of the Passover? No, you were not. The word here is *bashal*, and it means to boil.

Deuteronomy 16:7-8 ...and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. Six days [meaning six days more] you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.

What I was going to tell you here is that this sacrifice turns up at the crucifixion of Christ. Go with me back to Luke 22.

Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.

Do you see what I mean about confusion of terms? What the gospel writer—in this case, Luke—is doing, is that he is showing you 'the popular usage' of the terminology. This is very similar to what we do. Sometimes we call this season "Passover season." We just refer to it as that. But other times we refer to "the Days of Unleavened Bread;" and yet, within the context, it is often implied that we are including Passover along with that. I think we are less likely to do that than the Jews were, because of the blending of the two days which many of them did. But this is showing you that the two terms, according to popular usage, were used in both ways. Sometimes "Passover" referred to the whole eight days, and sometimes "the Days of Unleavened Bread" referred to the whole eight days. Is that clear? Okay, now let's go to John 18.

John 18:28 Then they lead 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.

Let's tie that together with chapter 19, and verse 14.

John 19:14 Now it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

Now, we know that event took place in the afternoon of the 14th—approaching The Night To Be Much Observed. These Jews—Caiaphas (a Sadducee, the high priest) and his group—did not want to go into the Praetorium "lest they should defile themselves" because they wanted to eat

the Passover.

Are you aware (maybe just since we read through Deuteronomy 16) that there were *other sacrifices* that were done during this season of the year? There was a multitude of voluntary peace offerings that the Israelites could make, if he so desired, in order to fulfill the requirements for that day. When I say "requirements" and "could require," the wording in the Bible seems to be much stronger than that. For example, Exodus 23: 15, where they were commanded during the Days of Unleavened Bread, not to appear before Him empty. That means, "make an offering."

They made a meat offering. Today, we make money offerings. But they made a sacrifice—usually the peace offering. And you can see this, again, in Deuteronomy 16: 16. We are going to look at Deuteronomy 27. This is talking about an event that is different from the Days of Unleavened Bread, but it just shows you the use of peace offerings. This is when they built the pillar of stones, after they crossed the Jordan River.

Deuteronomy 27: 7 You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God.

"McClintock and Strong," in their reference work, inform us that these offerings (especially the kind that would have been made on the first day of Unleavened Bread) were called *hagigah*. (Sometimes you will find that in a reference work with a "c" in front of it. That is, "*chagigah*.")

That word means, "festivity." These offerings were a festivity. They were something that someone did in order to have a feast. He wanted to be happy. He wanted to give God a peace offering, which was divided three ways. And with his portion, he would invite his family and friends around; and they would have a very fine festive time eating that meal and fellowshiping together.

These offerings are found, stipulated, in Numbers 10: 10. They are shown actually being offered in II Chronicles 30, beginning in verse 22. They are included, in that case, under the name "Passover." But they cannot be the actual Passover, because of the rules regarding the Passover having to be roasted, having to be from a lamb or a kid of the goats. But these offerings—the *hagigah*—are shown there in II Chronicles 30 quite a number of times. This was when Hezekiah had his very great feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover in the second month.

The eating of *hagigah* was an occasion of social festivity. Here comes John 18 in this. You are going to have to connect this to II Chronicles 30: 15-21; and that is this—that the Passover could be eaten with a measure of legal impurity. The real Passover could be eaten with a measure of legal impurity. You should understand that from yourself. You take the Passover knowing that you have sinned. And that's the very reason that you take it! Thus it was with them, as well. The Passover presumes that the person taking it has sinned.

I want you to think about the Days of Unleavened Bread and *hagigah*. What are we supposed to be doing during the Days of Unleavened Bread? We are supposed to be leaving sin behind. We are supposed to be coming out of sin. We are, theoretically, supposed to be sinless. Didn't Paul say, in I Corinthians 5, "You are unleavened"?

Now, the *hagigah* was not supposed to be eaten with any impurity. Do you remember what the priest said, or did? They did not want to go into the Praetorium, because they didn't want to be defiled. And there's a very interesting thought in this. That is this—if we have put the scriptures together here properly, it (in all likelihood) means that the high priest and his group had already eaten the Passover. When did they do it? The same time Jesus did! It was the Pharisees who were wrong. They were the ones who were keeping it one day late. And the high priest had already taken the Passover. So he did not want to be defiled, because he wanted to eat the sacrifice that was going to be made ~~at~~ twilight—for The Night To Be Much Observed.

There are other scriptures that we can draw upon here; but, putting these scriptures together, there are two conclusions. The one I have already given to you. That is, that in all likelihood the priests, the Sadducees, had already eaten the Passover; and they did not want to be defiled—so that they could continue to eat, in this case, the sacrifice that would be made that evening, the *hagigah*, the "festivity." And, therefore, they did not want to be defiled. And, most importantly then, I think it clarifies that the instructions in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 (when that is put into the context) becomes another point of confirmation that those sacrifices mentioned there are clearly for The Night To Be Much Observed and beyond.

Incidentally, that *hagigah* was not just sacrificed on the first night. You'll see in the instructions, when you begin to trace it out in the Bible, they were allowed to eat it for two days. So, they could kill another one and eat again, for another two days from it. It's a very interesting sacrifice.

Now, in conclusion, The Night To Be Much Observed is not Herbert W. Armstrong's "pipe dream," as some have called it. It is a commanded part of the very beginning of the Days of Unleavened Bread; and it gets the days off to a rousing and joyous start—by focusing on God's watchful oversight as He removes us from our bondage, and continues His oversight and providence throughout our pilgrimage.