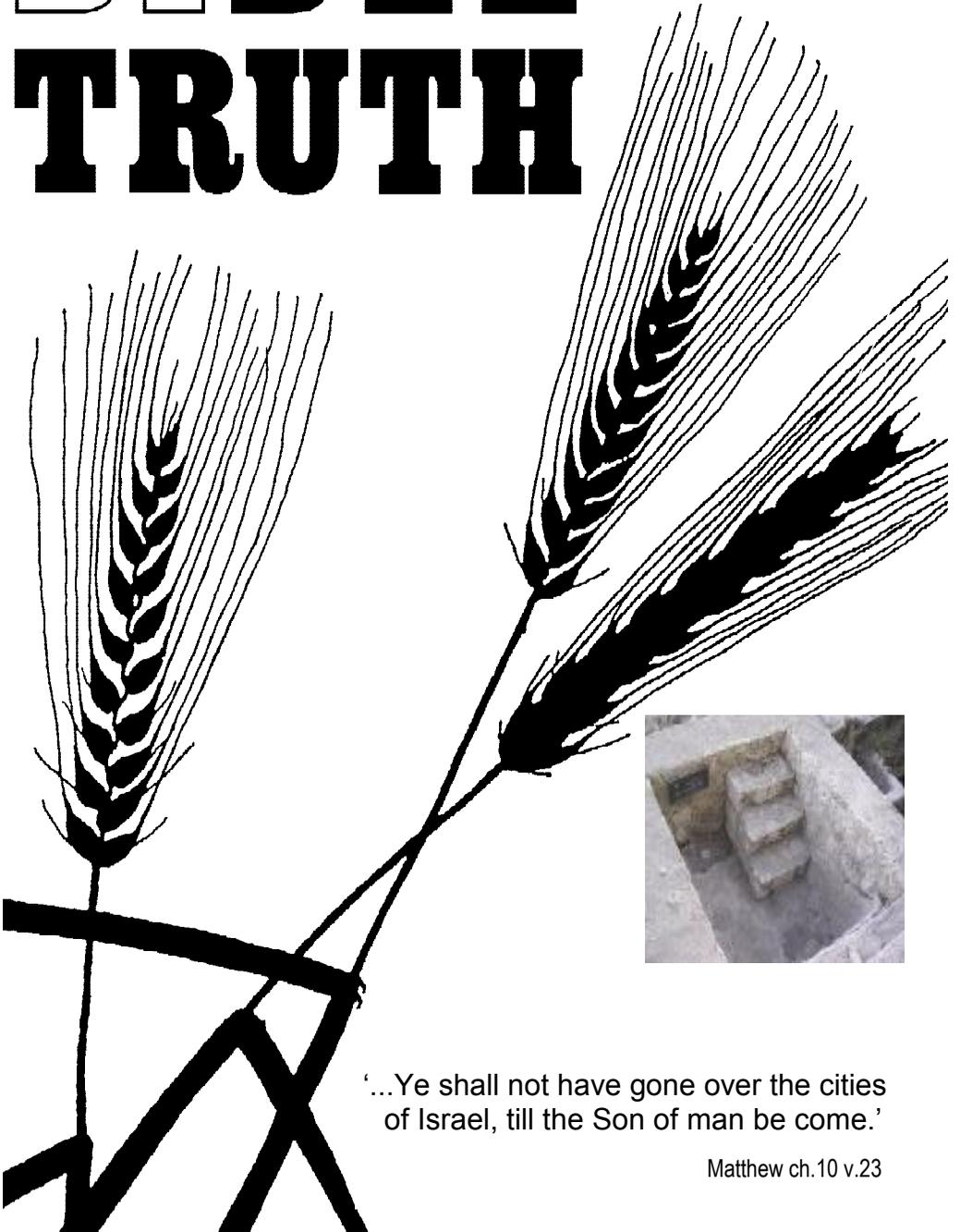


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'...Ye shall not have gone over the cities  
of Israel, till the Son of man be come.'

Matthew ch.10 v.23

# THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER

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*'Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, ...'*

1 Corinthians ch.5 vv 7-8

Firmly entrenched in the Christian calendar is the 'Easter season'. Annually in the Spring is celebrated perhaps the highlight of the ecclesiastical year, even - for the believer - eclipsing Christmas. 'Easter' includes both the final suffering of Jesus and a celebration of his resurrection. Its observance is not without controversy because for most of Christendom Easter replaced the Biblical Feast of the Passover.

Perhaps a surprise for many modern Christians, is that the festival of Easter was not observed by the first Christians. It was introduced in the second-century of our era by the church in Rome - at least in part to distance itself from the Jewish Passover observance on which the festival's timing is now based. The word 'Easter' appears but once in the King James Bible and is a translator's interpretation of the Greek pascha - Passover.

*'... to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him [Peter] forth to the people.'*

Acts ch.12 v.4

'Easter' is a late introduction and the name derives from the Assyrian mother goddess Ishtar also worshipped anciently as Diana, Cybele, Isis and so on.

The Feast of the Passover - in the New Testament also called the Days of Unleavened Bread in Acts ch.12 v.3, ch.20 v.6 is perhaps the oldest continuously-observed religious festival. In embryonic form (e.g. Exodus ch.5 v.1) it predates the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, when they were delivered from slavery by divine power. Each family (or a group of families) set aside a lamb on a specific date, placing the blood of its sacrifice around the door of their dwellings.

‘...and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you ...’

Exodus ch.12 v.13

By this means they escaped God's awesome judgement on the Egyptians, who had murdered all Israel's new-born boys. It is this which is commemorated annually in Judaism as Passover.

Passover is a seven-day festival: the first day and last day of which are holy days. Israel was instructed to observe it ‘... throughout your generations’ (Exodus ch.12 v.4). It will, unlike the Christian Lord's Supper, be observed even after the LORD returns. This is described in Ezekiel's vision for the future, (see Ezekiel ch.39 v.23 to the end of the book especially),

‘In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten’.

Ezekiel ch.45 v.21

A representative lamb was sacrificed in the Temple at the time of the evening sacrifice (3pm-4pm) on Nisan 14.

In the beginning, under Moses, families brought their own offering of a lamb, a portion of which was eaten as darkness fell on Nisan 15.

‘And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.’

Exodus ch.12 v.8

This was observed at the Hebrew year beginning, in early Spring.

‘In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.’

Exodus ch.12 v.18

As there are but seven days of unleavened bread, and as the festival ends on the 21st, this clearly refers to the end of Nisan 14, approaching sunset. This is confirmed by noting the timing of the Day of Atonement.

‘Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be

afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.'

Leviticus ch.23 vv 27-32

Note: time designations were, as today, fluid - evening merges with night. Also on the Hebrew calendar, days begin at sunset.

At the Exodus the instructions for Passover were practical. Unleavened (i.e. unyeasted) bread was used because they did not have time to allow the dough to rise (it was made daily). Bitter herbs (Hebrew 'bitters') may have been a nutritional ingredient. In succeeding observances the blood, flesh, unleavened bread and bitters took on symbolic meaning.

The seven-day Feast of the Passover was - along with the remaining festivals (see Leviticus 23) - universally observed by the first Christians, both Jew and Gentile. The symbols are perfectly adapted to the Christian faith. The lamb, clearly, represents Jesus.

'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'

John ch.1 v.29

'Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:'

1 Corinthians ch.5 v.7

Leaven represents false teaching.

'Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four

thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.'

Matthew ch.16 vv 6-12

It also represents hypocrisy.

'In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'

Luke ch. 12 v.1

To Luke, Paul adds this.

'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.'

1 Corinthians ch.5 v.8

Note: (v.7), the Corinthian brethren (largely Gentile) were at that time 'unleavened' (Gk 'azumos') - i.e. they were observing the festival both physically and symbolically. Yeasted products were (are) removed from the home for the seven-day period of the festival. (The practice is similar to the six week Lenten period on the Christian calendar - but at God's designated time and in the manner He prescribes).

The implication for Christian observance is that by eating, during the seven days of the festival, only bread that is unleavened (alongside other foods) we are, in symbol, 'putting on' the character of Jesus.

'But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.'

Ephesians ch.4 vv 20-24

With 'Christ in us' we are truly celebrating his resurrection. In contrast to the memorial of Christ's death, the festival is a joyous occasion.