

## CHAPTER 12

# RECOUNTING THE OMER, REPENTANCE AND FREEDOM – HOW IT POINTS TO CHRIST AND HOW IT APPLIES TODAY!

*“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ...” ~ Apostle Paul*

**A**s we obey God’s command to count off and recall (recount) Israel’s journey out of Egypt toward the true freedom that only God’s presence, Spirit and Law can bring, let’s understand how each major event along the way, including the giving of the Law atop Mount Sinai on Pentecost, all typed and pointed to Christ. He was the True Prophet of God that the people could and would finally hear (Deut 18:15, Acts 3:22, 7:37-38)! Counting the Omer is rich with valuable lessons about the role of our Messiah in saving us and bringing us true freedom and blessings TODAY!

Part of the blessing of God’s command to keep His Feasts of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost was in the helpful lessons and reminders obtained from following God’s instruction to recount, each year, Israel’s 50 day journey out of Egypt (Egypt came to symbolize bondage and sin) to a better life based upon the freedom and righteous enlightenment of God’s Decalogue. The fullness of this enlightenment includes joyful hope, comfort, help, and especially the deeply inspiring *enlightenment of God’s Holy Spirit* and conversion of the heart that He offers us all. This is all brought to light through the keeping of God’s Feast of Firstfruits.

Israel’s journey began the DAY AFTER PASSOVER, on Abib 15, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of God’s Feast of Unleavened Bread (Num 33:2-3). The next day marked the beginning of the 50 day journey. It was the day after the High Sabbath of Unleavened Bread – the day the Wave Omer was later to be harvested and the count to Pentecost begun (Deut 16:9-12, Lev 23:7-11). As we have already seen, counting from the day *after* Israel left Egypt – from the second day of Unleavened Bread – there were exactly 50 days until Israel would experience the glorious presence of God on Mount Sinai,

when God's Voice thundered out what became known as "The Ten Great Words" (The Ten Commandments) – God's Law teaching wisdom and love. Both the Law and the major events of Israel's journey leading up to and including the giving of the Law, POINTED TOWARD, SHOWS THE NEED FOR, and WAS A TYPE OF JESUS THE CHRIST – YESHUA – the True Passover and Shepherd of our Souls! Truly, counting the Omer (and all that it entails as instructed by God), should remind us of our need for Jesus Christ our Passover Savior, as we too come out of sin in life's journey to the freedom and presence of our Eternal Loving Great God named YHVH. Let's review the major events of this journey and see how it is so and how it applies for us today:

## **THE PASSOVER LAMB**

God instructed Israel on how they could avoid death, how they could be delivered from their physical, spiritual, mental and emotional bondage, and how they could be led to freedom in the blessed Promised Land. In this blessed free land, Israel would be given good and new laws to help them build a lasting happy society as they walked with their merciful saving God – the only true God. They were told to slay a perfect lamb, one that was without any blemish, and to put its blood on the door posts of their homes. To be saved and delivered from bondage they needed to come under the blood of the lamb! This beautifully pictures Jesus (Yeshua), the Lamb of God, our Passover Lamb who was sacrificed for us! Notice how God's Word presents Jesus as the Lamb of God who died to free us from the bondage and penalty of sin and to provide atonement for us with the Most High Father. Thanks to the Lamb of God – we can have real AT-ONE-MENT with the Most High Father God!

*John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

That first Passover beautifully pointed to Christ our Messiah – our perfect Passover Lamb who would free us from our sins and present us blameless before God so we can be blessed! He poured out His blood in our stead! He paid the debts for our sins, because we could not. He died, so we don't have to. We still need to be covered by His blood, the blood of the Lamb, to be freed from the bondage of sin and its penalties. This freedom includes God's gift of eternal life in the future spiritual promised land – a paradise that is typed by the pleasant rest of God's weekly seventh day (Saturday)

Sabbath (Heb 4:1-10). The apostles understood the important lessons of God's Sabbaths and Passover as did the whole New Testament Church. It was not until much later that a new apostate church began to undermine God's weekly Sabbaths and Holy Feasts, seeking to replace them with old pagan days in honor of the day of the sun god, and other festivals with new names with supposed new meanings that are actually whitewashed pagan customs.

Jesus is the Passover Lamb. It is His blood that we must come under in order to escape death. God was teaching this truth to Israel and the Egyptians alike – and His Word still teaches this valuable truth today. Do you have eyes to see?

*Rev 5:6-9*

*6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation..." (NKJV).*

God ***Passed-Over*** judgment and saved Israel and those believing foreigners and Egyptians, if they chose to come under the blood of the Lamb (Ex 12:48-49). That first Passover clearly portrays Christ as the merciful Passover Lamb from God.

## **BAPTIZED IN THE RED SEA – RISING TO A NEW LIFE**

God brought His people out of Egypt by many great miracles. This shows us God is our Salvation by grace, not works, as God saved Israel before He gave them His righteous Law of love. During their Egyptian captivity, the sons of Israel had lost God's Laws that their free fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others had followed. Salvation has always been by God's grace,

not our works. But **God did expect – and yet expects – repentance and change to accompany the process of salvation!** God is not mocked (Gal 6:7)!

As Israel and the strangers that went with them descended down into the depths of the sea – they were baptized in the Red Sea. They passed through a watery grave as if they were washing away their past. Indeed, it was a watery grave for those who did not come under the blood of the Lamb of God and whose sins were not washed away, for the whole army of Egypt perished in the sea that day (Ex 15:4-5)! Israel ascended safely up out of the water on the other side of the Red Sea, picturing the resurrection from death to a new life of freedom based upon God's Law that awaited them. Now that they were God's free people, they needed to repent of the false values, false religions and the lives of sin they had learned in Egypt. Their old way of life was to be replaced with God's Truths, Laws, Testimonies and Promises. Indeed, this is why the apostle Paul called Israel's crossing through the Red Sea a baptism since it typed our Christian baptism and the changed people we are to become today. Paul also said these lessons of Israel were recorded for true Christians to apply in the latter days (1 Cor 10:11).

Baptism is a type of death of the "old man" and the death of his past values and life style (Rom 6:1-6). Water baptism is also a type of having our sins and sinful past washed away (Acts 22:16, 1 Cor 6:11). Coming up out of the water after baptism pictures the resurrection back to life – a new life – one that is based upon love to God and fellowman, and obedience to God (Rom 6:4). Israel had a baptism of water in the sea which signified the death of the "old men" as their old sinful ways that led to death were symbolically being washed away. Paul further explained that Israel was baptized under the cloud of God's presence. This was a type of and pictured the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.10:1-4). Many do not realize that the God – the Rock – whom Old Testament Israel followed was also the Savior of all mankind – Jesus (Yeshua) the Christ (1 Cor.10:4)! Indeed, these events were all recorded for the future admonition of the Church of God and all who would become the modern people of God (1 Cor.10:11).

Israel's baptism in the Red Sea (and the baptized gentiles who went with them) foreshadowed the baptism that Jesus, John and the apostles taught and practiced. Baptism is always supposed to be accompanied by true BELIEF in the loving, forgiving and saving nature of God and His Son, the recognition of the need of a Savior, and real acknowledgment and

repentance from sin (Matt 3:2, 4:17). Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). Let's examine these required elements:

- 1 BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE OF YESHUA AS MESSIAH
- 2 REPENTANCE FROM BREAKING GOD'S LAWS

## 1. BELIEF – THE TRUE FAITH

To believe in God or Jesus is not just to believe they exist. James said even the demons believe that God exists, but theirs is not a true faith, since it has not produced fruits of godliness or a real trust and understanding of God's righteous loving nature (James 2:19-20). Israel believed God existed, but they lacked true faith in God. They lacked the belief or faith that God loved them and that He was saving them. Do you lack this kind of true faith?

Israel believed in God. But what they believed about God was evil! Why? Because they did not really trust His love for them or believe what He told them. They did not believe God, and they did not believe in God! They thought He was a cruel and harsh God who was out to catch them in sin and punish them unto death. While God was in the process of lovingly saving Israel – they thought God was out to destroy them. Israel illogically thought God hated them! This kind of thinking is accusatory toward God and is an evil affront to Him and His loving character! Though God repeatedly demonstrated many great acts of caring love, tolerance and forgiveness for Israel, they still did not develop faith in God or His pure motives for them. They did not know God! Do you know God? Have you learned that God loves you and will save you? Do you believe in God's loving nature, purpose and power to save you – OR – do you doubt God's loving nature and motives and power?

Notice what Israel believed about God:

*Deut 1:27 and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.*

Moses tried to encourage the people by reminding them of all that God had done, was doing, and yet would do (as He had promised) to save and bless Israel – but they remained unbelieving. Oh, they knew God existed – but

they lacked faith. We read what the people said of God, now let's read God's words, as He recounts all that He had done for His unbelieving accusers:

*Deut 1:29-36*

*29 "Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.' 32 Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, 33 who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.*

*34 "And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, 35 'Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, 36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.'*  
*[Emphasis added]*

Is this the kind of “faith” (or lack of faith) that you have? IF SO, YOU DO NOT TRULY KNOW GOD!

As we count and recall the Omer – the journey Israel and all mankind must make away from the bondage of sin to the freedom in the coming utopia, we would do well to remind ourselves of all that God has done for us, which also demonstrates His loving saving motives toward us and His awesome power to carry out His will.

Think about this: God gave us really good Laws and Statutes, which when followed, make us wise and lead us into pleasant loving behaviors (Deut 4:6, Ps 119:97-105, Rom 7:12, Rom 13:8-10, 1 Tim 1:5, 1 John 2:3-5). God also gave us many encouraging Testimonies which teach us about His loving nature. God gave us positive Millennial prophecies so we would be filled with hope. He gave us many prophetic warnings and testimonies to aid us in coming to repentance and salvation. God even gave us His Son to ransom us from Satan and sin! Jesus died for us so we don't have to. He is our Passover Lamb, sent by God, to pay the death penalty in our stead and make atonement for us to God. Have you accepted Christ as YOUR Passover Sacrifice who paid the penalty of your sins? **God has abundantly**

**demonstrated His powerful love for us! What else can God or His Son do to show us that they love us and that they are determined to save us?!** After all God has done and will do for us, it's NO WONDER why God calls a continuing lack of faith in His Love, in His wise and good Character, in His Nature and in His Saving Power – “AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF” (Heb 3:12)!

There was a eunuch who had been placed in great authority over many of the business affairs of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, who wanted to know more about the Messiah. After a thorough study of the scriptures about Jesus the Christ (Acts 8:26-38), Philip and the eunuch saw the need for the eunuch to be baptized (Acts 8:36). But before Philip would baptize him, he asked if he believed God and His plan of salvation **with all of his heart** (Acts 8:37). Do you believe God with all your heart today?

## 2. REPENTANCE

Repentance means to cease sinning and to live a new way of life. Jesus always taught that those whom He forgave were to cease from practicing sin, or else their troubles would increase (John 5:14, 8:11). **True repentance is not just the mockery of “lip service” to God (Gal 6:7).** Real repentance is always evidenced by the actions or fruits of our changed lives (Matt 3:7-8)! Repentance and baptism were the first steps the apostles taught that we all need to do in our walk with God through Christ (Acts 2:36-38) – as the journey out of Egypt foreshadowed. True baptism involves heartfelt belief in the Messiah **AND** real repentance. As we number Pentecost, we would do well to remember that Israel's baptism in the Red Sea (and under the cloud of God's presence or Spirit) was orchestrated by God to point to Christ (1 Cor 10:1-4, Gal 3:24). In addition, it pointed to coming out of sin – discontinuing the practice of the way of sin – dying to sin — repentance from sin – having our sins washed away – and the resurrection back to a new, free and better life with God!

*Rom 6:1-4*

*6 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*

*2 **Certainly not!** How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through*

*baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Remember, the merciful Christ who is full of grace is also the God of the Old Testament dispensation who calls Himself the “I AM” (Ex 3:13-14, John 8:58, Rev 1:8). He is also the great King of kings (1 Tim 6:15, Rev 17:14) – a Master and King who requires obedience (Mark 7:6-7, Luke 6:46). And Jesus (Yeshua) is also the Rock whose voice uttered God’s Great Law on Mount Sinai (1 Cor 10:4)! Grace accompanies repentance and obedience (Matt 5:17-19, 1 John 2:4).

**As products of society, we need to repent of what we have become, not just of what we have done!  
Often, the sins of others rub off, like a man who slips and falls into a dung hill. Though he may not have personally sinned by falling – he still stinks!  
~Don E. Haney**

When we repent, it is good to remember that we not only repent of our own personal sins. Just as Israel had to UNLEARN the ways they had practiced once they left Egypt, so we too need to repent of the sins of our society. We each have sinned personally by breaking a number of God’s righteous Laws. But we also have become a product of society. Therefore, we must learn to **REPENT OF WHAT WE HAVE BECOME, not just of what we have done!** We each have enough of our own sins. But our unrighteous state is made worse by the sins of society that also impacts us. Often, the sins of others rub off, like a man who slips and falls into a dung hill. Though he may not have personally sinned by falling – he still stinks! So a person who has been abused may develop ungodly habits in an attempt to protect himself. An abused person may not be able to love or receive love. Yet God commands us to love. With God, we can learn to love and be loved. There is always change when Christ begins to live in us (Gal 2:20). A person may have learned from society to dress in ways that God dislikes (Deut 22:5), or they may have developed disrespectful habits to their elders or their country’s leaders (Lev 19:32, Jude 8-10). We must be sure that what we have learned from our “fathers” fits the Holy Scriptures, for God commands us to repent of our personal sins and the sins of our fathers or society (Lev 26:39-42). When God’s grace is accompanied with repentant obedience, we then become a useful new creation in Christ and a fitting vessel for God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32, 2 Tim 2:21)!

## **THE WATERS OF MARAH HEALED – A TYPE OF**

## JESUS OUR HEALER

As we continue to count the Omer and learn from Israel's journey toward freedom, the next thing we see is God bringing Israel to the bitter waters of Marah. There God healed the waters and revealed Himself to them as "YHVH-ropheka," meaning "God their Healer." It was after He healed these waters in their sight that God promised them that He would be their Healing God and not to put upon them the diseases of Egypt (Ex.15:22-26), if they would diligently hearken unto His voice and obey Him. This again perfectly points to Christ our forgiving Healer. However, since none of us have obeyed God's just laws perfectly, we all need to be forgiven and often we need to be healed. This is very interesting in light of how many times Jesus and the Prophets tied healing together with God's forgiveness of sins.

*Mark 2:8-12*

*"... Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — He said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." <sup>12</sup> Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"*

The brave and faithful king, anointed of God and called the "sweet Psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam 23:1) – David – connected healing with the forgiveness of sins in Psalm One Hundred and Three:

*Ps 103:2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: <sup>3</sup> Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies."*

One of the greatest works of Jesus' ministry was that of healing. He used it to confirm His Words (Mark 16:20). Peter said Jesus fulfilled the Messianic promise of healing through the cruel whippings and beating that He suffered as part of His Passover sacrifice to atone for our sins (Isa 53:4-8, 1 Pet 2:24-25). Healing was also part of that first Passover, for God had healed all who departed from Egypt so they could make the journey (Ps 105:37-38). You could never find a mass of three to five million people (the number of Israelites scholars estimate left Egypt), without statistically

having many thousands who were sick, lame or feeble. Even small towns of only a thousand or so today have many who are bedridden, ill or feeble. Yet God's Word says of the Israelites that "there was none feeble among them" when they departed from Egypt, even though they had suffered under poor conditions as slaves. Part of the miracle of Passover was a mass healing. Interestingly, there was a mass healing at Hezekiah's famous Passover, as well (2 Chron 30:18-20). **Christ's forgiveness paves the way for our healing.** It's all part of the Passover sacrifice of the Lamb. Indeed, "by His stripes, we are healed" (Isa 53:5, 1 Pet 2:24). God used the Passover, and the waters of Marah that He healed, to point to the anointed Messiah our Forgiving Healer. Indeed, God is the strength of our life.

As we continue the countdown journey toward that first Pentecost, what did Israel encounter and experience next that was recorded for us to benefit from today (1 Cor 10:11)?

## **ON TO ELIM TO REST AND BE ENCOURAGED IN A SMALL TYPE OF PARADISE**

After the waters of Marah were healed and made sweet, Israel continued on to Elim where God allowed them to take a comfortable rest (Ex 15:27). There were 12 water wells at Elim [one for each tribe of Israel], and the shade of 70 fruit-producing palm trees [one for each of the 70 leading elders of Israel (Num 11:25)]. This little bit of paradise in the desert thrived from the water and shade God gave it. It was also said to have an abundance of Tamarisk and other trees, and to flourish with dates and tall grasses. Though life's journey is sometimes difficult, God will either heal the waters of life for us, or lead us to better waters. Indeed, if we are patient, we will see that God will always protect and lead His people to the serenity and comfort of still waters and green pastures (Ps 23), even as we travel along life's difficult journey toward the Promised Land – Paradise in God's Kingdom! God is teaching us that though we may suffer for a little while, it is to build our faith and trust in Him (1 Pet 5:10).

*Ps 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.*

Be patient. God will never leave nor forsake us (Matt 28:20, Heb 13:5). He is teaching us to faithfully TRUST HIM. It will not long before "The Sun

of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings (Mal 4:2)” and God’s people will burst forth in JOY as a palm-dotted desert healed by God with blessings and water, and decorated like a blossoming rose (Isa 35:1-2)!

## **MANNA – A TYPE OF THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN**

Israel then left the comfort of Elim and traveled on to the Wilderness of Zin. Here God was going to teach ALL of His people (especially God’s people today) some valuable lessons in faith and priorities!

*Ex 16:1 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin [Zin], which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.*

We are now studying about the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the Omer – the recounting of Israel’s journey away from slavery and sin and toward total freedom with God. God was now beginning in earnest to teach Israel to daily look to Him, and to THINK differently – to THINK like God’s people – to begin to practice one of the very things that God says IDENTIFIES a people as being His children – keeping His annual and weekly Sabbaths, and His law of love (Ex 13: 6-9, Ex 31:13, Deut 6:1-8). Of course, the other identifying sign of God’s true people is LOVE (John 13:35) – which is **the fulfilling or application of God’s Laws** (Rom 13:8-10, Gal 5:14, 1 Tim 1:5, 1 John 5:3). God used this marking point along Israel’s journey to teach some important spiritual principles:

- 1 **THE MANNA TEST**: God used the manna to TEST men to see if they will obey His instructions, Statutes and Laws (Ex 16:4). Men are more willing to obey God if it makes sense to them. It’s raw human nature. For example: Most understand the need to not steal, to tell the truth, not to murder etc. But most do not see or want to obey God’s Sabbath commands! God uses the Sabbath and other Statutes to TEST us to see if we are rebellious and will only obey God in matters that WE deem important – as if WE know more than God!

2 **THE SABBATH MARK:** God used the manna to MARK the Sabbath (the SIGN) with a double portion of Manna on the preparation day – the 6<sup>th</sup> day – and NO bread being collected on the Sabbath. This repetitious reminder continued to accent God’s Sabbath day for 40 years! God was reinstating the Sabbath in the minds of His people which their fathers kept before it had become lost to Israel during their Egyptian captivity. God was and is teaching His people to pay close attention to His commanded Holy Sabbath (Ex 16:4-5, 22-26). God’s weekly and annual Sabbaths are, and always have been, a SIGN or MARK of God’s faithful people (Ex 13:9, 31:13, Ezek 20:12). Satan and the beast have a different false day, in honor of the sun, as part of their identification or mark. Indeed, Jesus said He was still Lord of the **Sabbath** (Mark 12:8) – the **Holy Day** that **honors God** (Isa 58:13) – the day that **celebrates FREEDOM** (Deut 5:15) – and the day that commemorates when the Most High **Father rested at creation** (Ex 20:11)! The Sabbath is not to be confused with the gentile day honoring the pagan sun god [Sunday] (Ezek 8:16)!

3 **THE SABBATH PREPARATION DAY:** God used the manna to teach His people the importance of using the Sabbath PREPARATION DAY to avoid disrespecting God by breaking His Sabbath (Ex 16:23). When we do not take the time to prepare the heavy cooking and cleaning, the wood gathering, food or fuel purchases etc., before the Sabbath, then we are often pushed to break the Sabbath by doing those things God intended for us to do ahead of time. This is one reason why so many who claim to be God’s true people disobey God today by trading with the food merchants on the Sabbath or Holy Days, because they are no longer being taught how to keep Sabbath or about the importance of God’s preparation day. Many have watered down God’s joyful Sabbath Laws and now even seek to justify, to explain away God’s clear words, or to make excuses for their transgressions in order to uphold their church traditions or personal preferences. Such is a shameful and licentious teaching which maligns God’s Truth.

*2 Peter 2:2 Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers, the way of truth will be maligned. NRSV*

This is nothing new. Many leaders among God's people taught the traditions of men over the doctrines of God in Old Testament times and up to Jesus' day, as well (Matt 15:3-7). Nehemiah had to deal with the people of God who had become so liberal that they justified and excused their habit of "profaning the Sabbath" by purchasing food from the "fast-food-carts" of their day (Neh 10:31, Neh 13:15-18). Today, many use "TRADITION" and the teachings of their modern "spiritual fathers" to justify their violation of God's Sabbath by trading with the food merchants on God's weekly Sabbath or Festival Holy Days. **Jesus warned against blind guides** (Matt 15:14). God's Word is clear and unambiguous on this. **Indeed, the Sabbath is yet a TEST commandment today!**

All of us fall somewhat short and thus we rest our hope on our forgiving Savior. However, with proper use of the preparation day, and by sharing home food and fellowship after each Sabbath service as the early Church did (Acts 2:46), the gentile practice of buying food – by eating out on God's Sabbaths – is not necessary! Obedience and faithfulness to God does require some preparation time, but the rewards are always great. Is our walk with God today worth a little preparation? Or are our daily activities and "traditions" more important to us than God's directives as the Father of His family? Jesus never sinned. Jesus never ate at a merchant's establishment on the Sabbath. Like the Church He founded, Jesus ate at people's homes for Sabbath fellowship and a meal (Luke 14:1). Let's follow Jesus' example. How are we faring regarding GOD'S SABBATH TEST?

- 4 **CHRIST THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN**: God was and is teaching us all that **CHRIST IS THE LIFE-GIVING BREAD THAT WE ARE TO SEEK AND EAT DAILY**! This is of primary importance.

Notice God's Words:

*Ex 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will **rain bread from heaven for you**. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.*

Yeshua the Christ is the true bread from heaven! The manna was used to make flat wafers or cakes – like unleavened bread (Num 11:7). It sustained Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. But they had to “go out and gather a certain quota every day.” So, too, we must seek and “eat” Christ DAILY! Jesus is the living Bread from Heaven!

*John 6:30 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"<sup>32</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." <sup>35</sup> And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

Just like Israel needed to eat the manna DAILY, so we too need to eat Christ – the true Bread from heaven DAILY. While the manna was a teaching type of Christ, it was only a temporary substitute for something much better – something (someone) that would not only extend temporary life – but grant life eternal! God used the manna as an image to beautifully foreshadow for us Jesus’ flesh and life as our humble, life-giving and sinless (unleavened) Passover Bread (Col 2:16-17, Heb 10:1)!

This is why the apostle Paul said that Israel ate the same spiritual food that we take at Passover today (1 Cor 10:2). He said, “**the bread we break, is it not communion of the body of Christ?** (1 Cor 10:16).” Throughout 1 Corinthians chapter ten, Paul directly compares the manna Israel ate in the desert to the unleavened bread we eat at Passover and during God’s Feast of Unleavened Bread today! Now that we have Christ the True Bread from heaven – let’s EAT!

*John 6:48 I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> 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." <sup>52</sup> The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> 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. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

## WATER FROM THE ROCK – “THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST”

After sometime with the manna in the Wilderness of Zin, it was time for Israel to move on and experience some more of God’s thoughtful shepherding. Notice:

*Ex 17:1 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.*

*Ex 17:5 And the LORD said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. <sup>6</sup> Behold, **I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.**”*

This is a very beautiful passage indeed as it wonderfully pictures the life-giving Waters of the Savior – God’s Holy Spirit. Notice in Jesus own words to the Samaritan woman at the Jacob’s well:

*John 4: <sup>9</sup> Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you **living water.**" <sup>11</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" <sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But **the water that I***

*shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*

This time, God did not bring Israel to another stream or brook. This time, God brought WATER FROM A FLINTY ROCK (Ps 114:7-8)! Flint is a rock, that when struck, can bring fire. Here, the flinty rock also brought water! God is a powerful consuming fire (Ex 24:17, Heb 12:29). But He also brings us the joy of His life-giving water to refresh and rejuvenate us unto salvation (Isa 12:2-3)! Paul called Christ the Rock that gave Israel water to drink. **"They drank the same spiritual drink... and that Rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:4)!"** Peter also referred to Jesus as that Stone that the builders rejected and a Rock of offense to the disobedient, but precious to those who believe (1 Pet 2:8). The water out of the Rock was clearly portraying Jesus our Rock who gives us the life-giving Waters!

**It was after the rock was *struck*, that the life giving water came forth (Ex 17:6). It was after Jesus, our Rock, was stricken that we too have life (Isa 53:8). It was after His death that He poured out His life giving Holy Spirit upon us! Praise the LORD!**

**However, if we continue to "strike" the Flinty Rock of Israel, through persistent unfaithfulness and disobedience, we may also experience the "fire" of His correction (Mal 4:1, Heb 4:1-6, Heb 12:28-20). Let's not do that!**

*John 7:37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Jesus is our Rock, our Bread, our Living Water, our Hope, our eternal life, our precious gift from the Father. Jesus said it is those who HUNGER and THIRST for righteousness, who will be satisfied (Matt 5:6)! Are you thirsty?

## SATAN'S DETRACTORS

While Israel was camped in Rephidim, Satan sent his detractors to seek to fight with Israel, seeking to prevent them from entering the Promised Land. This clearly portrays our battles on life's road to live a more godly life. It shows us our real daily need for our defending Shepherd. Anytime someone begins to draw near to God, Satan tries to discourage them or side-track them (Matt 13:26-28). Remember, it was on the seventh day after Israel departed from Egypt that Pharaoh tried to attack Israel and bring them back into a life of slavery and false religions. But GOD SAVED Israel by drowning all the Egyptian army in the Red Sea!

It was the children of the brother of Israel (Jacob) who, driven by envy, sought to kill all Israelites to prevent them from inheriting what God was giving them. Satan used the Amalekites, the children of one of the Dukes of Esau, to attack Israel (Ex 17:8-16). But God brought about a victory for Israel. God will always defend His true people. This is one more lesson we are to be reminded of each year when we "count the omer."

Do you sometimes get discouraged and feel as if you can't struggle against Satan's world any longer? That's Satan talking. But, be of good cheer, Jesus our powerful loving King has overcome both the devil and this world (John 16:33). There will be times when it will be hard while we are tested in order to build our faith and character, but God is building in us something far more lasting and precious than fleshly things or gold (1 Pet 1:6-7). Let's remember God's promise that ALL THINGS WILL WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD, to those who LOVE GOD, and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28)! We may forsake Him, but God will NEVER leave nor forsake His elect (Heb 13:5). Though He punishes as any good Father does, God's love is undying!

*Isa 49:15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.*

*16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands...."*

God has shown and is continually demonstrating His love for us. He has gone the extra mile in every way. He loves us, is saving us, and will see us through *every* trial (1 Cor 10:13). Do we believe Him?

*Ps 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But **the LORD delivers him out of them all.***

After God granted victory over Amalek, it was ON TO MIDIAN AND THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD. Israel was now very near God's PRESENCE and the receiving of His LAW which would make Israel's FREEDOM COMPLETE! The counting of the omer is complete, OR is it? You see, God teaches us to recall these events each year between the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost (His Feast of Firstfruits).

Every step of the way, each thing Israel experienced was pointing toward Christ our Messiah. Pentecost and God's Law were no different! God's Law was given 50 days after Israel's departure of Egypt, on what became known as Pentecost, and IT'S AIM WAS CHRIST! The Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost, and it encourages us, comforts us and writes God's Laws on our hearts (Ezek 36:26, Heb 10:16)!

We not only are to learn from Israel's mistakes and successes, but we are to consider our own state with God as we prepare for Pentecost and learn to properly appreciate and use God's Holy Spirit. Let's not waste our life. Let's not waste God's precious Spirit. Let's make the countdown to Freedom PERMANENT through the Shepherd and overseer of our souls.

Once God's Laws were given, Israel had an advantage over all other nations of the world (Deut 4:6). But without God's Spirit, they would soon stumble through weakness. That's why we must realize that God's Laws cannot save us! **A servant or slave only gets what he or she earns! WE CANNOT EARN LIFE OR THE RIGHT TO BECOME SON'S OF GOD – ROYALTY! ROYALTY IS ONLY PASSED ON BY BEING AN HEIR, BY BEING SON'S OF THE KING OF KINGS – SON'S OF GOD (Rom 8:16-17)! Salvation is not earned! But salvation can be wasted or discarded!**

I know God's Law is great and I love it and strive to live by it, as we all should - BUT CHRIST IS BETTER, and I love Him and our Father God much more! But when Christ is living in us, He will live the same life in the flesh that He did 2000 years ago. A true Christian's life will not be a life of compromise and disobedience to God's Laws. It will be a life of change and encouragement as we grow in the freedom of God's Truth!

God's Laws provide opportunity for us to build CHARACTER. They are a light to our path (Ps 119:105) – but Christ is the path, the way, the light and the truth (John 14:6)!

“Salvation is not earned! But salvation can be wasted or discarded!”  
~Don E. Hanev

God's Law is the mirror that shows us our defects so we can change and be more Christ like (Ps.19:8-12). Paul said, “...by the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom3:20). He also taught that sin, through the law, shows us where we need to change, AND it shows us the need for our Savior, when we fall short (Rom 7:7, 13).

The Statutes and Laws of God work like A TUTOR OR PERSONAL NANNY, teaching us the godly character of how to live like royal sons of God. Princes and princesses are taught and prepared by personal tutors on the mannerism and the way the royal family is to conduct itself. They also need to be groomed by their tutors on how to rule justly, based upon the laws of the kingdom over which they will govern. God's Law is the tutor (Gal 3:24) that teaches us how to rule with Christ as kings (Rev 5:10). God's Spirit will write His Law on our hearts, as His Law helps prepare us to be like He is! It teaches us how to love God and fellow man (Mark 12:28-34). And it teaches us of the NEED for our saving Messiah, as we all fall short! As Paul said, Christ is the end, the goal post or the aim of the law and the target that it points to (Rom 10:4)! **School is not the point – it's the education and instruction it brings (Gal 3:24-25). So it is with God's Law! The purpose of God's Law is:**

- To lead us to Christ
- To tutor us in His Majesty's ways so we can be like Him
- To show us our faults and the need for God's MERCY
- To teach us to also learn MERCY and BE MERCIFUL
- To help us build Character – to be made into His image with the help of God's Holy Spirit
- To bring us up like a schoolmaster or tutor, BUT AS SONS NOT SLAVES!!!
- To prepare us to rule under and with Christ and our Grand Loving Holy Father
- To teach us HOW to love God and our neighbor. Indeed, God's Law met Love, and they kissed! They are inseparable.

As beautiful as God's Kingdom is – God is greater. With all the beauty of the new healed landscape, all the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead and the PEACE IN PARADISE – GOD IS GREATER! God's Law is good - indeed a great and wise gift from God. But GOD is what His Law aims us toward! God is greater than His Law! He is the purpose and the Most High and His Son is the Way. As David said, a **day with God is better than a 1000 years without** (Ps 84:10).

MAY GOD WRITE HIS GOOD LAWS ON OUR HEARTS WITH HIS HOLY SPIRIT, AND EMPOWER US TO WALK IN HIS PATHS, AND MAY HE HAVE MERCY ON OUR SOULS.