

January - March 2014

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

A HOLY PEOPLE

A Holy People ■

Tale of Two Believers ■

Should New Testament Christians
Keep The Passover? ■

The Gospel & the Poor

When John sought confirmation about who Jesus really is, Jesus answered: “Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.” (Mat. 11:2-5; Luke 7:22). Gospel means good news. Jesus’ good news generates hope for the hopeless – especially to the segment of society who needed it most, the poor.

Now, why emphasized on the poor as the “first beneficiary” of the gospel? The dirt poor - the purely “unlettered” – have remote chances of freeing themselves from the quagmire of misery. They are highly vulnerable to exploitation by the wily and the wise of this world. They have less if not bereft of life’s resources - defenseless and powerless. More often, the “witty” who will assume to take the lead in uplifting their plight have their own private agenda other than their assumed advocacy. Most likely they are the ones who will improved their lot and subsequently change their perspectives. Through methods “legitimate” or not, they will accumulate enough resources to catapult themselves to the level of the rich and powerful. The poor, the usual “stepping stone” to advance the interests of the “users” are forgotten, until another personality with the same crafty caliber will rise and use them as “stepping stone” again. Thus, the poor as pawns will continue to wallow in abject poverty. And the cycle continues.

When Jesus delivered the gospel to the poor, He meant to release them from the bondage of helplessness. While this happened already to some who chose to diligently follow the guidelines and principles of living that God prescribed in the Bible, the global fulfillment will finally happen when Jesus returns to take over the kingdoms of this world from human governments (Rev. 11:15). Then He will rule forever with the saints (Rev. 5:10; Rev. 20:4,6; Daniel 7:18,27). This is one of the essential features of the good news that Jesus brought. This is the only hope of mankind.

The powerless today will have a taste of what are truly just, fair and equitable under a system instituted by Christ and the saints. The message of the gospel, which Jesus also commissioned His followers to proclaim (Mk. 16:15) is the only hope, especially to those who missed the kind of life that God intended mankind to live through. It is the lasting solution to put an end to the hopeless state of the poor; and to everyone who are tired of expecting the change that will not happen through human efforts.

(For a thorough understanding of the gospel, request a FREE copy of the booklet “What is the True Gospel”. Contact information can be found at the last page of this publication.)

ARMOR OF GOD

January - March 2014 Circulation : 20,000

The **Armor of God** magazine is published by the Church of God, International [Philippines]. It is made possible through the freely given tithes and offerings of members and fellow laborers of the **Church of God, International.**

Publisher : Rene D. Corpuz

Editor-in-Chief : Eleno S. Mellomida

Editorial Staff : Winston S. Co

Melchor P. Arcinas

Mariou G. Sanchez

Contributing Writers : Ferdie S. Padilla

Layout : Mel Joseph S. Diegor

PHILIPPINES

Church of God International, P.O. Box 2450
MCPO Makati City, Metro Manila 1264 Philippines
Phone : [632] 995-0294 Fax : [632] 995-0577

Website : <http://www.cgiphils.org>

E-mail : info@cgiphils.org

Mobile : [63917] 811-6365

UNITED STATES

Church of God International

P.O. Box 2525 Tyler, TX 75710

Phone : [903] 939-2929

Website : <http://www.cgi.org>

E-mail : info@cgi.org

AUSTRALIA

Church of God International

P.O. Box 171 Boonah, QLD 4310

Phone : 011-61-7-5463-2949

E-mail : h-thaupt@bigpond.com

CANADA

Church of God International, 1299 Oxford St. East

P.O. Box 33034 London, Ontario N5Y 5L4

Phone : [519] 741-0455

Website : <http://www.cgicanada.org>

E-mail : johncoish@rogers.com

JAMAICA

Church of God International,

P.O. Box 776 Kingston 19 Jamaica

Phone : 1-876-925-2260

Table of Contents

A Holy People

3

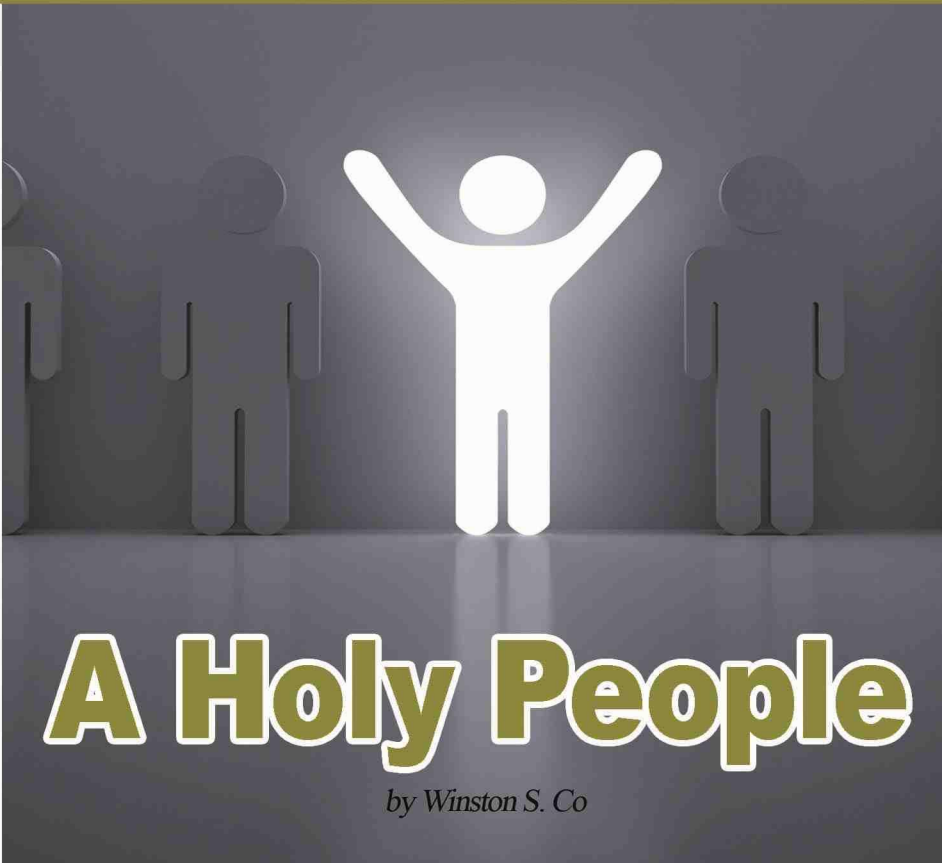
Tale of Two Believers

6

Should
New Testament
Christians

11

Keep The Passover ?



A Holy People

by *Winston S. Co*

Christians must be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:13-16). The word “holy” is often interpreted to mean “righteous, pure, clean or morally upright”. But, the Hebrew word “qadosh” (kedushah) translated ‘Holy’ carries a different meaning. The basic Hebraic concept of the word ‘Holy’ has the connotation of sanctification suggesting “separation, apartness and distinction.” Being ‘holy’ therefore means to be separated by God and for God. Since God is Holy, His people and children are also holy - having been set aside for Him.

Paul wrote: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what

fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of God; just as God said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will welcome you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me”, says the Lord Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). God’s people should be separated and set apart from the filth of the world and the influence of Satan.

Peter added: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

In other translations, a “chosen generation” is rendered an “elect race”. Since Christians are called out by God to be His special people, then they are a chosen generation and the elect as well. A royal priesthood means noble teachers of God’s laws. A holy nation means sanctified or separated citizens for the Kingdom of God. A peculiar people means an extraordinary, unusual, uncommon, special, unique, rare, scarce, distinctive, remarkable and exceptional. Peter is saying then that true Christians are a special group of people set aside by God for His very own purpose. They are God’s treasured possession! They are called out of the darkness of this present evil world into His glorious and marvelous light of truth (Gal. 1:4).

The concept of setting apart as ‘holy’ is not a New Testament concept. The concept of sanctification goes way back to the time of Ancient Israel as God’s chosen people. Note the following passages: Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy (Lev. 19:2). Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God (Lev. 20:7). God’s people are to be separated for God and by God. (Exodus 19:5-6)

Signs of Separateness

True Christians are indeed peculiar. And to be peculiar involves certain visible attributes that will set them apart from the rest. Some have asked: "What are the signs of God's true church and God's true people?" Is it reasonable to look for a sign of who are God's people? Can you single out God's people in a crowd? Do they manifest signs of separateness, of sanctification and of holiness? When you look at a person, you can easily identify him as a man of God. How? Are there physical manifestations that reveal his godly attributes?

• Keeping the Food Laws



God said: "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are in the face of the earth. You shall not eat any detestable thing (Deut. 14:2-3).

God's people are strictly keeping the dietary laws prescribed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Thus, in their food preferences alone you will notice the difference between who's who. Why? There are certain animals that God intended not to be eaten. They are categorized as unclean animals (Lev. 11:4-47; Deut.

14:21).

Unclean animals are grouped into several categories: predators (unclean because they ate both the flesh and the blood of animals); scavengers (unclean because they were carriers of disease, and they regularly contacted dead bodies); potentially poisonous or dangerous foods such as shellfish, crustaceans and the like. Eliminating these from the diet of Israel had a healthy effect. The reason for the dietary laws is to keep God's people healthy!

Unclean animal meats are unfit for human consumption. Eating them is as good as sharing in their food chain. When the animal is unclean it also makes the partakers unclean. This uncleanness is both physical and spiritual. In fact, even clean animals which die of itself is unfit for food (v-21). Why? It has not been bled properly. It is important to bleed animals before eating them, because in principle, the blood represented the life of the animal (Leviticus 17:11), and the life belonged to God.

• Keeping the Tithing Law



Tithing is a way of honoring God. "Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Prov.3:9-10). "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of

heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:9-10). You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. (Deut. 14:22)

When you prioritize God with the tithe, not only are you rendering honor, homage and glory to Him who owns everything on earth (Isaiah 50:10-12; Haggai 2:8), a blessing is also pronounced on the tithe giver (Deut. 14:29). There is blessing in honoring God through our substance. God will bless the giving heart. Ask anyone who tithes as the Bible instructed and they will tell you they

are blessed.

Modern preacher will tell you that nowhere does the New Testament command tithing. The opposite is equally true - nowhere does the New Testament specifically abolishes tithing, but it certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (Luke 11:42).

• Keeping of the Sabbath Day and Celebration of God's Holy Festivals



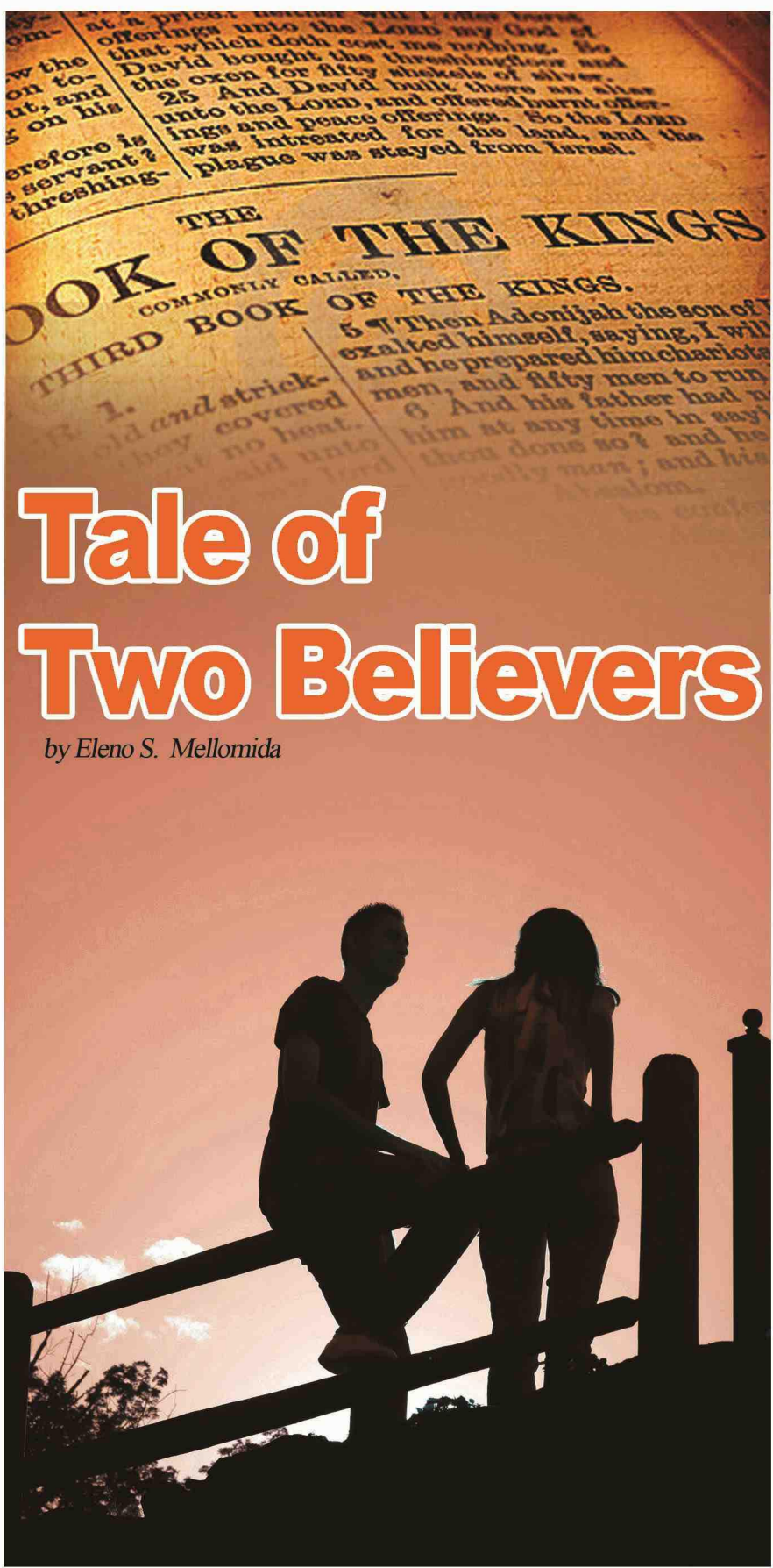
God has designed certain days as Holy for His people. God's chosen people are bound to worship God in those designated days. He prescribed certain Holy Days for His own people to observe; not any other days, or more particularly those which are identified with pagan and idolatrous practices.

The 4th commandment that says to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy is a sign of holiness. God said in Exodus 30:31. The other holy days of the Lord are listed in Leviticus chapter 23 and Deut. 16. *(For a thorough understanding of God's Holy Days, request a FREE copy of the publication: Roman Holidays vs. God's True Holy Days)*

Summation

Once one becomes a true Christian, he/she is not supposed to get entangled with the corruption of this world - particularly its customs, traditions and practices that go against the word of God. The standard of true Christian sanctification, separation, distinction and holiness applies to everyone who wants to have a close relationship with the true God. The identifying signs that bore the hallmarks of a true follower of God are obvious, and they are doable; these are holiness on food, tithes and observance of God's true holy days. **AG**





Tale of Two Believers

by Eleno S. Mellomida

Jesus performed miracles after miracles. He casts out demons, healed the sick - hundreds of them (Mat. 4:23); and in two separate occasions He “multiplied” a few pieces of bread and fishes to feed the hungry crowd of 4000 and 5000, respectively (Mark 8:19-20; Mat. 14:17-21; John 6:9-13).

Yet, despite all these astounding miraculous performances, His credibility in His own community remained very low, if not downright nil. This cool reception of Jesus fulfilled John’s statement that “He came into His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). Sort of expressing His displeasure over the rejection and the ‘cold shoulder’ treatment by His own countrymen, He said, “Verily I say unto you, no prophet is welcome in his own hometown” (Luke 4:24).

Then He recalled two accounts in the Old Testament which put Him into more trouble with His audience. He said: “But, I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came all over the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarepath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; but none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of

the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff (Luke 4:25-29).

What exactly were the lessons being portrayed behind these two accounts which Jesus made referenced to that infuriated His audience? Of what value are the incidents cited by Jesus to the 21st century Christians?

The Widow of Zarepath

1 Kings 17:1-24. Verses 1-7 tells us of the long drought resulting in a severe famine in Israel. Elijah, the prophet who prayed for it as a punishment for Israel's idolatrous activities (James. 5:17), was advised by God to move to a place where his physical sustenance will be divinely provided. When the water supply finally dried up, (v-8) the word of the LORD came to him, saying, (v-9) "Arise, go to Zarepath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." v-10 So he arose and went to Zarepath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her, and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." (v-12) As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." But she said, "As the Lord YOUR God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat

and die." (v-13) Then Elijah said to her, "do not fear, go do as you have said but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. (v-14) For thus says the Lord God of Israel, " The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted , nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that Lord sends rain on the face of the earth.

(v-15) "And she went and did according to the word of Elijah: and she, and he, and her household ate for many days." This sounds a little odd; accommodating a request to share with one's final meal before dying in exchange for a promise which is humanly impossible to fulfill sounded like getting caught in between magnanimity and despondency. (v-16) And the bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke through Elijah.

(v-17) Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. (v-18) So she said to Elijah, " What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!" (v-19) He said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living and laid him on his own bed. (v-20) He called the Lord and said, "O Lord my God, have you also brought

calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?"

(v-21) Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him." (v-22) The Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. (v-23) Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." (v-24) Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

Only two miracles happened in this occasion; both had to do with human survival. And this was good enough for the widow to accredit everything to the God of Elijah. Her statement in verse 24 implied a direct affront against Jesus' skeptical and unbelieving countrymen. No wonder they were furious and murderous when Jesus recalled the incident. Whereas Israel, the chosen people of God, stubbornly refused to believe Jesus despite the miracles performed in their presence, a gentile widow who knew nothing about the God of Israel listened to Elijah (verse 15) and sincerely acknowledged God's existence and divine power.

Take note that during Elijah's request she said, 'as the Lord YOUR God (not hers) lives' (verse 12). So, even if she had been given prior instruction by God to

accommodate Elijah (v-9), she still thinks God is not her god. Yet, you will notice, in the course of this 'episode' that she was compliant with all that Elijah told her. Now she knew the true God, and believed.

Naaman the Leper

2 Kings 5:1-24 Naaman was a valiant warrior and a well decorated head of the army in the Kingdom of Syria. Victories after victories were achieved by Syria because of his gallantry and war skills. But Naaman is also afflicted with leprosy.

One day a captive Israelitish girl who served Naaman's wife made mention of a prophet in Samaria who can possibly heal Naaman of his leprosy. The word reached Naaman who asked permission from the king for a journey to Israel. The king not only granted Naaman's request, he also loaded Naaman's entourage with wherewithals of high value. And, as a keen advocate of diplomatic protocol, Naaman's master sent a letter to the king of Israel asking the latter to cure the malady of his trusted warrior. Upon reading the letter, the king of Israel's reaction was one of annoyance and extreme anxiety knowing the impossibility of his counterpart's request. He tore his clothes and said: "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me." (v-7)

The king misinterpreted the letter to mean a ploy to provoke a war; and to him this



was worrisome, knowing the power and might of the Syrian army. When Elisha, the prophet of God, heard about the king's predicament, he sent word to the king to let Naaman come to him instead so that he will know that there indeed is a prophet in Israel. (v-9) So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. (v-10) Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you, and you will be clean."

Apparently, Elisha's undiplomatic reception did not generate a friendly meeting with the warrior. Naaman expected a welcome reception befitting a man of his stature. But the prophet merely sent a servant to greet him, who

subsequently "commanded" Naaman to go and "take a bath". "Wow! How rude of him to treat me ordinarily", must have been the unspoken words lingering in the mind of Naaman. With feelings 'wounded' and pride challenged, in disgust he must be saying, "haven't this guy heard of my exploits, is he unlearned enough to disregard my medals which speak highly of who I am?" Notice: (v-11) But Naaman was furious, and went away, and said, "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and cure the leper."

Naaman expected more than a mere command to "take a bath". He probably was exposed to pagan and

ritualistic method of healing. He thought the prophet's "medical advisory" was very shallow and ordinary to produce the desired effect. He wasn't convinced, thus he retorted back, saying (v-12) "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

The situation undoubtedly aggravated Naaman's already slighted persona. With the "dishonorable" reception, and the nationalistic fervor that he used to nurture within himself, the idea of "taking a bath" at foreign waters may have compounded Naaman's displeasure of his adventure. He probably felt disappointed about this trip already, until a calm and appealing voice came to the rescue. (v-13) Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then when he says to you 'wash, and be clean?' Despite Naaman's noticeable self-importance, he was also a reasonable man. (v-14) Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean. (v-15) When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him: he said, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: so please take a present from

your servant now."

(v-16) But he said, As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing." And he urged him to take it; but he refused. (v-17) Naaman said, "If not, please let your servant at least be given two mules' load of earth; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offerings no burnt offerings or sacrifice to other gods but to the Lord." v-18 In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.

Naaman will continue performing his physical duties as the king's trusted aide. But within himself he knew who to worship and who to render obeisance to. It is always what's inside you that God

looks on. "But to this one will I look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:2) And the prophet read Naaman's attitude correctly; (v-19) And he said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him some distance.

Here is a valiant warrior, a high ranking official in one of the powerful kingdoms of his time, a gentile. And he sought the healing powers of the God of Israel. Syrian kings and bigwigs consult the prophets of Israel (2 Kings 8:7-13). In contrast, the kings of Israel consult and go to pagan gods - to Beelzebub - the god of Ekron! (2 Kings 1:3) This was a one time event for Naaman. And he believed, pronto. He shifted allegiance to the true God and do away with pagan and idolatrous form of worship.

"Behold, now I know that there is no god in all the earth, but in Israel...your servant will no longer offer either burnt offerings or sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord." Naaman the leper (in verses-15 &17)

Deliberate Rejection

There's no doubt that some of those who heard Jesus preached and witnessed His miracles were religious leaders who were entrusted with the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2). But they refuse to acknowledge His works - let alone believed in His divine origin. In like manner, albeit in a more disturbing circumstance, there are "Christians" who are biblically oriented and thoroughly knowledgeable about the truth of God. Furthermore, they may have personally experienced some kind of miraculous incident in their lives. Sadly, they turned away from God as the days go by.

They advocated freedom from the so-called "restrictive" features of God's law and subscribed to the teachings that grace, mercy and compassion alone are the only requisites to salvation. Peter warned: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and

overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:19-22). When Jesus said, "Depart from Me you that work lawlessness" (Mat. 7:23), it is addressed to those who have full knowledge of God's way, and who deliberately turned away from that knowledge (Heb.6:4-6; Heb.10:26-29).

Finally...

We heard the testimony of the widow from Zarepath, we heard it from Naaman the Syrian; both exalted, revered and acknowledged the power and might of the God of Israel who happens to be the God who created the entire human race (Gen. 1:26; Acts 17:24-28). Both, the widow and the leper are gentiles in the flesh, yet they believed in the God of Israel to the consternation and envy of Jesus' compatriots. Definitely our Savior wants us to emulate the tale of the two believers.

**"THE DOG IS TURNED
TO HIS OWN VOMIT AGAIN;
AND THE SOW THAT WAS WASHED
TO HER WALLOWING IN THE MIRE"
(2 PETER 2:19-22).**

Most professing Christians believe that Passover is a "Jewish" holiday that is not applicable to Christians today. Instead, they substitute Communion, the Mass, or "the Lord's Supper." In view of this, we must ask the question, "What does the Bible say?"

One cannot help but wonder how much the average professing Christian really knows about the Lord's Passover. The extent most people know about it has been gleaned from the Cecil B. DeMille's epic film, *The Ten Commandments*.

Israel's miraculous release from over 400 years of cruel, hopeless, and abject slavery in Egypt came by the hand of Almighty God through a series of warnings and plagues, and was climaxed



Should New Testament Christians Keep the Passover?

by: Lloyd W. Cary

by the death of all Egypt's firstborn. On that very night, the Hebrews were set free, and were urged by the devastated Egyptians to get out of the country as quickly as possible. This remarkable deliverance by the hand of God has been commemorated ever after by the Jewish people by a yearly festival called the Passover.

The Passover was so named on the account Hebrews by the angel of death. The Passover lamb foreshadowed Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29,36) who would deliver God's people from the bondage of sin and death. The first time the word "Passover" is mentioned in the Bible is found in Exodus 12:11: "And thus shall ye eat it; with

your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover."

Notice, the Bible calls it "the LORD'S Passover," not the Jews' Passover. It is *His* Passover because He ordained it, fulfilled it, and commanded it. To the Israelites, the Passover was a "Festival of Freedom," ordained it, fulfilled it, and commanded it. To the Israelites, the Passover was a "Festival of Freedom," commemorating the deliverance of Israel from over 400 years of abject slavery in Egypt. The deliverance of more than two million people from slavery is not an event to be forgotten!

But What About Today — Should *Christians* Observe the Passover?

Referring back to the original Passover, we read in Exodus 12:14: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance *FOREVER*."

How long? This Scripture says we are told to keep this feast *forever!* This does not contain any verbiage by which a Christian could reasonably conclude that the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread ended with Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The original Passover was a physical *type* of a much larger spiritual event than merely sparing the

firstborn Israelites. It also pictured the death of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Although much lip service is given to following Christ's example in mainstream Christianity, few consider the fact that the New Testament says, "...For even Christ *our passover* is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Both *Christ and His disciples kept the Passover*. We read of Jesus Christ during his last Passover. First, He washed the disciples' feet (John 13:8, 14–17). We further read, "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is [symbolically represents] my body, which is broken for you: this *do* in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this *do* ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do shew the Lord's death TILL HE COME*" (1 Corinthians 11:24–26). He concluded, "For I have given you AN EXAMPLE, that ye should *do* as I have done to you" (John 13:15). Sadly, instead of following Christ's humble example, most of Christendom's churches have substituted the traditions of men such as "communion," "the Mass," and "the Lord's supper." "Why," He asks, "*call* ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? "Ye hypocrites," He exclaims, "well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and

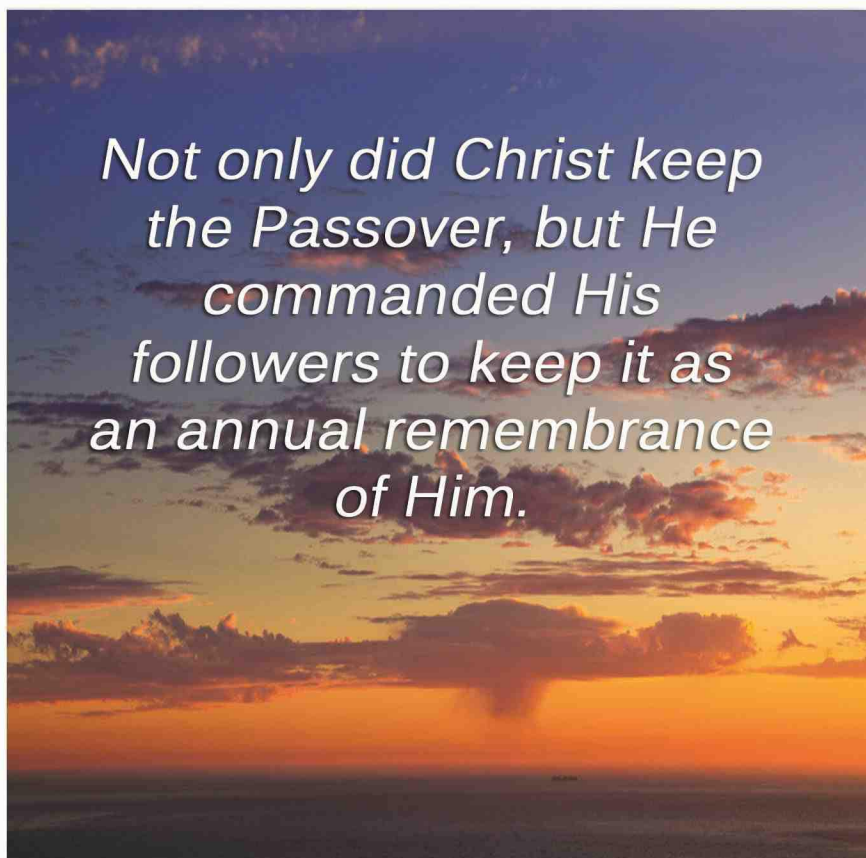
honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.' But *in vain* they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of *men*" (Matthew 15:7–9).

"But," some will object, "the Passover was only for the Jews." It is referred to as "the Jews' Passover" not because they owned it, but because the Jews were observing it. It is called the Jews' Passover in John 2:13; 6:4; and 11:55, because in that culture the Gentiles did not keep it—only the Jews were obliged to keep it.

Just as most people misunderstand prophecy because they cannot identify the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel, much of the confusion as to whether Christians should keep the

Passover surrounds the issue of *WHO IS ISRAEL*. Most Christians have been taught that Israel means only the Jews. This notion is erroneous.

In the first place, in the 8th century B.C., the ten northern tribes of Israel were carried away by the Assyrians. Unlike the Jews who had returned from captivity in Babylon, the ten northern tribes were never repatriated to Israel as a group. Although some undoubtedly did return as stragglers, the majority ventured west and have become referred to as "THE LOST TEN TRIBES OF ISRAEL." The Jews retained their national identity of Judah, because they kept God's identifying sign, the Sabbath



*Not only did Christ keep
the Passover, but He
commanded His
followers to keep it as
an annual remembrance
of Him.*

and holydays, while the northern ten tribes did not. While the nation of Judah incorporated hundreds of added laws and traditions in order to “build a hedge” of protection around the Sabbath and holydays, the nation of Israel lost their identity and eventually assumed they were Gentiles. [For a thorough in-depth study of this fascinating subject, be sure to request our eight-CD series and accompanying booklet entitled *The Biblical Origins of the United States and British Commonwealth*.]

Secondly, we are told by no less an authority than the apostle Paul, “... They which are the *children of the flesh*, these are *not* the children of God: *but the children of the promise* are counted for the seed” (Romans 9:8). This was in opposition to one of the most settled and deeply-cherished opinions of the Jews. They supposed that the mere fact of being a Jew entitled a man to the blessings of the covenant, and to be regarded as a child of God. Paul clarifies, “But he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:29). Christ said, “If ye love me, *keep* my commandments” (John 14:15). This includes the keeping of God’s commanded Passover *forever*. Paul said, “*All* scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), and, of course, all they had in the time of the apostle Paul was the OLD Testament! Christ said, “Think *not* that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am NOT come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17). This should be enough to convince even the least discerning believer that even a “Gentile” Christian has part in this everlasting remembrance of God’s Passover. To assume we are children of God who are *not* required to follow God’s “house rules” is foolishness at best and rebellious at worst.

The Early Church Was Instructed to Keep the Passover—and They Did!

Not only did Christ keep the Passover, but He commanded His followers to keep it as an annual remembrance of Him. A memorial is observed *annually* on the day of the event, not weekly, monthly or bi-annually. “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: *THIS DO* in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

1 Corinthians 11:24–26: “And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is

*“If I wash thee not, thou hast NO PART with me” .
(John 13:8)*

the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death *till he come*.” Read that again! THAT is what the Passover represents to Christians!

Christians *did* keep the Passover for hundreds of years after Christ’s death and resurrection.

If the early Christians followed Christ’s command and example in keeping the Christian Passover, *why* have believers stopped keeping it and begun observing the pagan Easter celebration instead? As Dresden James philosophized, “When a well-packaged web of lies has been sold gradually to the masses over generations, the truth will seem utterly preposterous and its speaker a raving lunatic.”

The customs and traditions of Christendom certainly fit this saying. Passover was suppressed in much the same way that pagan observances were instituted. It was the *Roman Empire* followed by the *Roman Catholic Church* that decreed it to be so.

The Influence of the Roman Empire

It is estimated that as many as one million Jews died in the Great Revolt against Rome (66–70 AD). Because of the enmity between Rome and Jerusalem on account of this revolt, Rome levied a heavy tax (“Fiscus Judaicus”) against the Jews. The criteria to determine who was a “Jew” was computed as follows: Anyone who kept the *Sabbath*, studied the *Torah*, kept God’s *dietary laws*, *circumcised their sons*, and kept *God’s feast days* were counted as Jews, and were taxed accordingly.

When the power of the Roman state transferred to the Roman church, this animosity did not stop, but continued as a Roman cultural prejudice. As a result, the Roman hatred of anything associated with the Jews was absorbed by the church, including any obedience to the *Torah* (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), as well as any observance of the holydays. Such anti-Semitism has continued to this day.

The Influence of the Roman Church

The Roman church, although not exactly approving of it, tolerated observance of

Passover out of respect to the *Apostle John Polycarp*, and the other disciples. Tensions rose higher and higher after the death of Polycarp, whose disciples continued to keep the Passover and other biblically ordained feast days.

In 325 AD, the Roman Emperor *Constantine* made Christianity the “official religion” of Rome. Out of political expediency, he soon “Christianized” the *pagan feast days* to preserve calm and order in his realm. Legalizing the *mixture* of pagan customs and feast days with those of Christianity was soon enforced by seizure of property, freedom, and pain of death. *Fox’s Book of Martyrs* details many of the persecutions and martyrdom of those who insisted upon keeping God’s Sabbath, the Passover, and holydays as taught by Christ and His apostles. See Revelation 2:2,10, 13, 25; 3:3,11, and 17:6.

Eusebius recorded the Emperor Constantine’s words concerning the practice of pure Christianity: “*Let us have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd.*” An official declaration from Constantine stated that it was considered to be “...*improper to follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival.*” Thus, Christians were no longer free to keep the Passover in Rome, a prohibition that continued when the authority that had once belonged to the old Emperor of Rome transferred to the new Emperor called “the *Pope of Rome.*”

Thus, Passover was no

longer recognized by the Roman church, having been replaced by the pagan celebration in honor of *Venus*, called *Easter*. The same goddess is called *Ishtar* by the Assyrians and Babylonians, who had carried the people of Israel into captivity.

And so, just as the children of Israel were held in *physical* bondage for their idolatry and their unwillingness to honor God in spirit and in truth, so they now find themselves in *spiritual* bondage in their unwillingness to hold fast to the truth. The sad fact is that some believers may not have the strength of conviction—unable to break the bonds of tradition and false Christianity—to honor God as He has commanded us in His Word.

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:8). We “draw nigh” to God by OBEYING Him as revealed in His Word, the Holy Bible. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Boiled down to its simplest form, all God says to His people is, “Just obey Me. Just do what I tell you and all will be well.” That’s all He said to Adam and Eve in the Garden. That’s all He told ancient Israel. And all He says to us today.

When addressing the foot washing part of the Christian Passover ceremony, Christ said, “If I wash thee *not*, thou hast *NO PART* with me” (John

13:8). SOBERING WORDS! "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 5:8). Back to our title: "Should New Testament Christians today be keeping the Passover?" *Absolutely!*

Passover 2014 begins at sunset April 13..Will *you* be obeying your Lord and Savior?

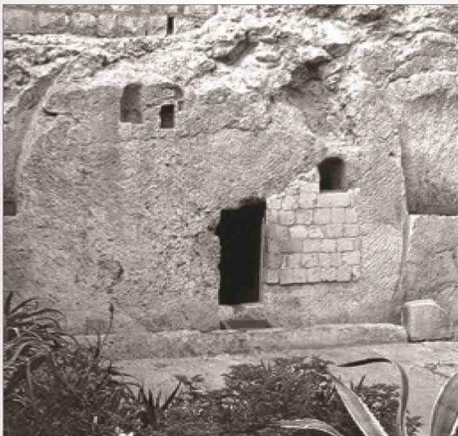
Announcing a brand-new booklet!

Did Christ Die On a Friday and Rise On a Sunday?

Shortly before His crucifixion, the murder-plotting religious leaders of Jesus' day demanded a "sign" that He was, indeed, the Messiah. He gave them a sign—a sign that religionists *disbelieve to this very day*: "For *AS* Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, *SO* [in like manner] shall the Son of man be three days *and* three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39–40).

Most of Christendom traditionally believes that Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon (Good Friday), was placed in the tomb before sundown Friday night, rested in the tomb on the Sabbath (Saturday) and was resurrected on Sunday morning at dawn. Shockingly, either that tradition is *false*, or you have no Savior!

The sign Jesus gave was not *just* the fact of His death or even of His resurrection—no, not at all—but the **LENGTH OF TIME** He would be in the heart of the earth—the grave—before being resurrected. Yet millions deny that sign! Was Jesus mistaken? Did He lie? Do the math! Can *you* honestly squeeze 72 hours between Friday and Sunday? Can *you* explain this sign to others *right from your own Bible*?



Was this Christ's Tomb?

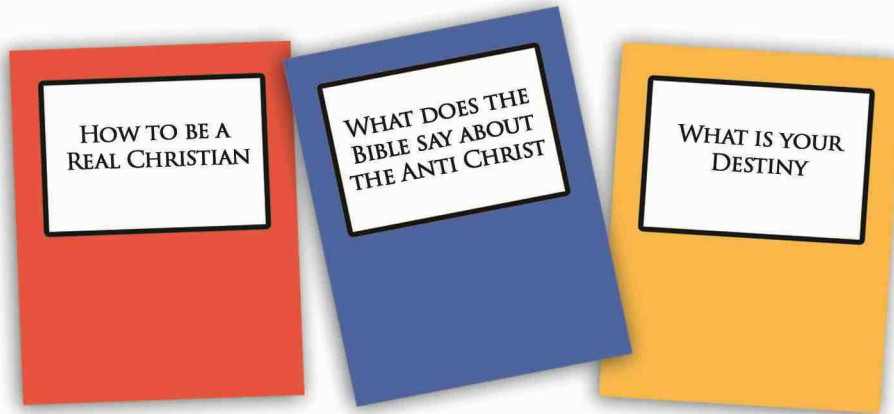
Be sure to request your *FREE* copy of this shocking, yet easy-to-read and understand booklet, *The Three Days and Three Nights!* You have never read anything quite like it.

Church of God International
P.O. Box 2450 MCPO Makati City,
Metro Manila 1264 Philippines
Phone : [632] 995-0294

Website : www.cgiphils.org

FREE BOOKLETS

TEXT FULL NAME &
COMPLETE ADDRESS TO
0917-811-6365 FOR A FREE COPY
[ALLOW 4 TO 6 WEEKS FOR MAILING]



THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACES

Manila

6th Floor, Peaksun Building
Princeton St. [Along Shaw Blvd.]
Mandaluyong City, Saturdays, 10:00 am

Naga

Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City
Saturdays, 10:00 am

Alabang

4Th Floor Metropolis Star Mall, Alabang
Muntinlupa City, Saturdays, 2:00 pm

Negros Occidental

Brgy. Vito, Sagay City
Saturdays, 10:00 am

Malolos

Hiyas Convention Center - Governance Bldg.
Malolos City - Bulacan, Saturdays, 2:00 pm

Mindanao

Alson's Palace, Maranding, Lala
Lanao del Norte, Saturdays, 10:00am

Cebu City

Rajah Park Hotel
Fuente Osmeña Circle
Saturdays, 2:00 pm [Every 1st Saturday of the Month]

Iloilo City

Iloilo Midtown Hotel
Yulo Street
Saturdays, 2:00 pm