

January – March 2013

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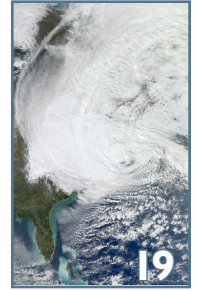
# BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

## Continue WHAT?

**Habakkuk's  
Warning**  
*is for Us Today*

**Valentine's  
Day**  
*Should Christians  
Observe It?*

# BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



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**About the Front Cover:** The photo shows some of the few remaining bricks (plus some added later) of a building known as the Cenacle. The Cenacle is believed to have been the site of perhaps the earliest real Christian church building. Some legends suggest this is near or where the last Passover of Jesus, Pentecost of Acts 2, and/or certain other notable New Testament events took place (like Matthias being chosen as an apostle, Acts 1:12-26). While its New Testament use is scientifically questionable, it certainly was a location that the Nazarene Christians used until they were forced out of it in the fourth century by supporters of Emperor Constantine's professed faith. Although the Greco-Romans have built their type of church around it, some few of the original bricks continue and are shown on the cover.

BibleNewsProphecyTM is published by the *Continuing* Church of God, 1248 E. Grand Avenue, Suite A, Arroyo Grande, CA, 93420. <http://www.ccog.org>

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# FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF: BOB THIEL

## CONTINUE WHAT?

*Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*  
(Luke 12:32)

In December 2012, it became necessary for me to cease my affiliation with a group based out of North Carolina and form the *Continuing Church of God*.

So, since the word “continuing” is part of the title, the question to be briefly addressed here is: Continue what?

First, it needs to be understood that according to Jesus, the church itself would continue and the gates of Hades (death) would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

Second, despite what the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics seem to wish to believe, the Bible is clear that no one city would remain the main location of the true church throughout the church age—it is the Church of God and not some particular city that is supposed to continue.

Let us look at what Jesus and the Apostle Paul taught on this matter:

22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. 23 For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes (Matthew 10:22-23).

14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come (Hebrews 13:14).

Since Christians have no continuing city, it is the Church of God, not some city such as Rome or Alexandria that was supposed to continue to lead Christ's church.



While the Apostles Peter and Paul held leadership positions in the Church of God, after they died, the Apostle John rose to higher prominence, and despite certain Roman misinformation, John would have been the leading ecclesiastical authority on earth the last one to four decades of his life. He also wrote the last four to five books of the New Testament. Despite that, even the Apostle John had opposition (3 John 9-11).

But he also had supporters and followers. One that John apparently ordained was Polycarp of Smyrna. Unlike many in the so-called “apostolic succession” lists of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics, Polycarp was ordained by one or more of the original apostles according to relatively contemporaneous records, Polycarp wrote information that is still preserved (such as his letter to the Philipppians), and a book/letter was written about him shortly after he was martyred (around 160 A.D.).

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## But was he faithful?

Well, according to pretty much all Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholics scholars, he was.

Notice some of what Ignatius wrote in the early 2nd century:

...to Polycarp, bishop of the Smyrnaeans...So approving am I of your godly mind, which is as it were, grounded upon an unmovable rock, that my praise exceeds all bounds...Do not let those who appear to be trustworthy yet who teach strange doctrines baffle you. Stand firm, like an anvil... Grace will be...always...with Polycarp (Ignatius. Letter to Polycarp. In Holmes M.W. The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Texts and English Translations. Baker Books, Grand Rapids (MI), 2004, p. 194-201).

Irenaeus records this about Polycarp in the late 2nd century:

But **Polycarp** also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but **was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop** of the Church in Smyrna...always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time (Irenaeus. Adversus Haeres. Book III, Chapter 4, Verse 3 and Chapter 3, Verse 4).

Notice that Irenaeus is claiming that Polycarp was appointed bishop (pastor/overseer) of the Church in Smyrna by the apostles in Asia (which would most likely have been John and Philip and perhaps some others) and that **Polycarp continued the faith and practices of the original apostles**. Notice that Irenaeus is claiming that there was a list of men who have succeeded Polycarp until the late 2nd century and that they held to the teaching of the apostles. Thus the only universally accepted apostle to “bishop” transfer of leadership for the 1st and 2nd centuries that continued until at least the end of the 2nd century was through Polycarp of Smyrna (more on “apostolic succession” can be found in the article simply titled Apostolic Succession).

## So, what did Polycarp teach?

Well he taught the Bible, the kingdom of God, the resurrections, the commandments of God, the love of God, etc. Here is some of what he wrote in his *Letter/epistle to the Philippians* with some scriptural citations that I added:

Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: Mercy to you, and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, be multiplied.

### CHAP I — PRAISE OF THE PHILIPPIANS.

I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because you have followed the example of true love [as displayed by God], and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God (Colossians 3:12) and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in days long gone by (cf. Philemon 5), endureth even until now, and bringeth forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 15:8), who for our sins suffered even unto death (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3), [but] “whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave” (Acts 2:24). “In whom, though now you see Him not, you believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8); into which joy many desire to enter (Matthew 13:17; cf. 1 Peter 4:13), knowing that “by grace you are saved, not of works,” (Ephesians 2:8-9) but by the will of God through Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 2:8-10).

### CHAP. II — AN EXHORTATION TO VIRTUE.

“Wherefore, girding up your loins” (cf. Ephesians 6:14; 1 Peter 1:13), “serve the Lord in fear” (cf. Hebrews 12:28) and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and “believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory” (1 Peter 1:21) and a throne at His right hand. To Him all things in heaven and on earth are subject (1 Peter 3:22; cf. Philippians 2:10). Him every spirit serves. He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). His



blood will God require of those who do not believe in Him (cf. Luke 11:50). But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also (1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Romans 8:11), if we do His will, and walk in His commandments (2 John 6; cf. Revelation 22:14-15), and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness (cf. John 7:18), covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; “not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing” (1 Peter 3:9), or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching : “Judge not, that you be not judged; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you; be merciful, that you may obtain mercy; with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again; and once more” (Matthew 7:1-2, cf. Matthew 6:12,14; Luke 6:36-38), “Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3,10).

#### CHAP. III — EXPRESSIONS OR PERSONAL UNWORTHINESS.

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because you have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom (cf. 2 Peter 3:15) of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and stedfastly taught the word of truth (Ephesians 1:13) in the presence of those who were then alive (cf. Acts 16:13). And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter (Philippians), which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour, “is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26). For if any one be inwardly possessed of these graces, he hath fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that hath love is far from all sin (cf. James 2:8-9).

#### CHAP. IV — VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS.

“But the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Timothy 6:10). Knowing, therefore, that “as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7), let us arm ourselves

with the armour of righteousness (2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 6:11); and let us teach, first of all, ourselves to walk in the commandments of the Lord (John 14:15). Next, [teach] your wives [to walk] in the faith given to them, and in love and purity tenderly loving their own husbands in all truth, and loving all [others] equally in all chastity (Titus 2:4,5); and to train up their children in the knowledge and fear of God. Teach the widows to be discreet as respects the faith of the Lord, praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17) for all (cf. 1 Timothy 5:5), being far from all slander, evil-speaking, false-witnessing, love of money, and every kind of evil; knowing that they are the altar is of God, that He clearly perceives all things, and that nothing is hid from Him, neither reasonings, nor reflections, nor any one of the secret things of the heart (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:25).

So, Polycarp realized that the true church was called the Church of God and that he placed a high priority on the scriptures and the doctrines in them, including the commandments and love.

This is what we in the *Continuing* Church of God also are striving to do.

Now, here are some of the beliefs that Polycarp and others in the early Church of God held to that we in the *Continuing* Church of God. also hold to:

**Baptism** was by immersion and did not include infants.

**The complete Bible** with the proper Old Testament and New Testament which was relied on by the true Church in Asia Minor.

A **Binitarian view**, that acknowledged the Holy Spirit, was held by the apostolic and post-apostolic true Christian leaders.

**Birthdays** were not celebrated by early Christians.

**Born-Again** meant being born at the resurrection, not at the time of conversion.

**Celibacy for Bishops/Presbyters/Elders** was not a requirement.

**Church Governance** was hierarchical.

**Christmas** was not observed by professing Christians prior to the third century, or ever by those holding to early teachings.

**Circumcision**, though not required, was long practiced

by original Nazarene Christians.

**Confession** of sins were not made to priests and did not require penance.

**Deification of Christians** was taught by the early leaders of the Church.

**Duties of Elders/Pastors** were pastoral and theological, not predominantly sacramental—nor did they dress as many now do.

**Easter** *per se* was not observed by the apostolic church.

**The Fall Holy Days** were observed by true early Christians.

**The Father** was considered to be God by all early professing Christians.

**The True Gospel** included the kingdom of God and obedience to the law of God and was so understood by the faithful.

**Heaven** was not taught to be the reward of Christians.

**Holy Spirit** was not referred to as God or as a person by any early true Christians.

**Hymns** were mainly psalms, not praises to Christ.

**Idols** were taught against, including adoration of the cross.

**Immortality of the soul** for humans was not taught. Jesus was considered to be God by the true Christians.

**The Kingdom of God** was preached.

**Leavened Bread** was removed from the homes of early Christians when the Jews did the same.

**Lent** was not observed by the primitive church.

**Limbo** was not taught by the original church.

**Military Service** was not allowed for true early Christians.

**Millenarianism** (a literal thousand year reign of Christ on Earth, often called the millennium) was taught by the early Christians.

**Monasticism** was unheard of in the early Christian church.

**Passover** was kept on the 14th of Nisan by apostolic and second century Christians in Asia Minor.

**Pentecost** was kept on Sunday by certain Jews and was observed then by professing Christians.

**Purgatory** was not taught by the original apostolic church.

**The Resurrection** of the dead was taught by all early Christians

**The Sabbath** was observed on Saturday by the apostolic and post-apostolic Church.

**Salvation** was believed to be offered to the chosen

now by the early Church, with others being called later, though not all that taught that (or other doctrines) practiced “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

**God’s Six Thousand Year Plan** for humankind to rule itself was believed by early professors of Christ.

**Sunday** was not observed by the apostolic and original post-apostolic Christians.

**The Ten Commandments** were observed by the apostolic and true post-apostolic Christians—and in the order that the Church of God claims they are in.

**Tithes and Offerings** were given to support the ministry, the churches, the needy, and evangelical travels and gospel proclamation.

**Tradition** had some impact on the second century Christians, but was never supposed to supercede the Bible.

**The Trinity** was not a word used to describe the Godhead by the apostolic or second century Christians, though a certain threeness was acknowledged.

**Unclean Meats** were eaten by the early allegorists, but not by true Christians.

**The Virgin Birth** was acknowledged by all true ante-Nicene Christians.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God are striving to best represent the most faithful remnant of the original Church of God that began on Pentecost in Acts 2 (c. 31 A.D.) and we believe and teach the doctrines of the original apostolic and faithful post-apostolic Church of God, and in particular, the Philadelphia-era of the Church of God.

The Apostle Jude wrote to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

How can one contend earnestly for the original faith if one does not know what it consisted of?

Well, one of the goals of the *Continuing* Church of God is “To restore knowledge of more of the truths of original Christianity” (Jude 3) according to our mission statement and that is part of what we are striving to do. As well as to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God and His son Jesus the Christ.

The New Testament also says to:

32 continue with the Lord (Acts 11:23)

43 continue in the grace of God. (Acts 13:43)

22 exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

22 continue in His goodness. (Romans 11:22)

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it (Colossians 4:2)

15 continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:15)

16 Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. (1 Timothy 4:16)

14 you must continue in the things which you have learned (2 Timothy 3:14)

1 Let brotherly love continue. (Hebrews 13:1) or more literally, Let Philadelphia (φιλαδελφία) continue.

And we are to be "continuing steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles" (Acts 2:42 YLT) which is also what we in the *Continuing* Church of God are striving to do.

In January 2013, we established another YouTube channel. This one is titled ContinuingCOG. It now has a two-part sermon (in total both parts are about one hour) titled Continue What (1/5/12) Part 1 and Continue What (1/5/12) Part 2 for those of you who might wish to watch it. Additional sermons are planned to be added to the ContinuingCOG channel on a regular basis.

Teaching the truth and love of the word of God to the world in general and those called in this age in particular (Matthew 28:19-20) is the mission of the *Continuing* Church of God. ■

## HABAKKUK: His MESSAGE IS FOR Us TODAY



*Statue Intended to be Habakkuk by Donatello (15th century)*

*By Bob Thiel*

Habakkuk was a Hebrew prophet. Some observe a memorial to him on January 15th.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia of 1906* reports this about him:

Around 605-625 B.C. Habakkuk wrote a short book of the Bible that has a lot of implications for the time that we are now in.

Here are some passages from it (*italics are not inspired*)

but were headings in the translation):

1 The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.

#### *The Prophet's Question*

2 O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

#### *The Lord's Reply*

5 "Look among the nations and watch — Be utterly astounded! **For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you.** 6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. 7 They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. 9 "They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. 10 They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it. 11 Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god." ( Habakkuk 1:1-11)

Notice that the above states that the end time work will not be believed by many even though God will reveal it through His prophets.

#### *The Prophet's Second Question*

12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. 13 You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, **And hold Your tongue when the**

**wicked devours A person more righteous than he?** 14 Why do You make men like fish of the sea, Like creeping things that have no ruler over them? 15 They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net, And gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they sacrifice to their net, And burn incense to their dragnet; Because by them their share is sumptuous And their food plentiful. 17 Shall they therefore empty their net, And continue to slay nations without pity? ( Habakkuk 1:12-17)

Notice that in the above the one getting punished will be punished by someone who in certain ways is worse than the one who will be punished. So while some believe that in certain ways that the USA and its Anglo-allies are more "righteous" than the Beast power that will destroy it, the reality is that this is part of God's plan.

2:1 I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.

#### *The Just Live by Faith*

2 Then the Lord answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 *For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak*, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith. (Habakkuk 2:1-4)

Notice that the prophecy that is being discussed is for the appointed time of the end. It is a prophecy for our time—and will affect the proud.

#### *Woe to the Wicked*

5 "Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man, And he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations And heaps up for himself all peoples. 6 "Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, '**Woe to him who increases What is not his — how long? And to him who loads himself**



**with many pledges’?** 7 Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you, Because of men’s blood and the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it. ( Habakkuk 2:5-8)

Actually, with an admitted \$16+ trillion dollar debt and plans to increase that much further, the U.S.A. has increased pledges more than any nation in the history of the planet. And on a *per capita* basis, the United Kingdom is one of the most indebted nations on the earth itself.

Since the above prophecy in Habakkuk will be fulfilled at the time of the end (cf. “The message was true, but the appointed time was long...in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come”, Daniel 10:1,14). Daniel 8:19, 11:27,29,35 use same the Hebrew term for “appointed time” as Habakkuk 2:3, while Daniel 10, using a different term, ties the latter days to the time in Daniel 8:19. Habakkuk 2 was not fulfilled in its entirety anciently. Also, it makes little sense that Habakkuk would be directed towards the modern nation of Israel as it does not have enemy creditors. It must be a nation or group of nations with some prominence at the appointed time of the end. As far as “violence of the land” as a contributing factor, this would seem to include crime, military missions, and perhaps riots/civil unrest, but might it also include promotion of violent sports?

Although Habakkuk lived over two thousand years ago, the reality is that since much of his message is for the appointed time of the end, his writing (that God inspired) is applicable today.

Do you believe the words that God inspired Habakkuk to write? If so, do you really understand what is going to happen to the U.S.A., U.K., and their Anglo-descended allies relatively soon?

*(Parts of this message were delivered both on the internet as well as an internationally-syndicated radio broadcast in January 2013.)* ■

## IT’S ALL ABOUT LOVE

*By Bob Thiel*

### What is the Continuing Church of God really all about?

Is it simply a group or corporation who thinks it follows the right rules?

While rules are important (cf. John 14:15; Matthew 23:23), what is most important?

According to the Jesus, the apostles, and the late Herbert W. Armstrong, and the *Continuing Church of God*, love is what is most important.

Notice some of what Mark recorded:

28 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”

29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

32 So the scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. 33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

34 Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” (Mark 12:28-34)

The importance of love is confirmed by many in the New Testament. Notice the following statement from the Apostle Paul:

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three;

but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Notice some passages written by the Apostle John:

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also. (1 John 4:7-21)

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:1-4)

The following is from Herbert Armstrong's book *The Mystery of the Ages*:

True religion—God's truth empowered with the love of God imparted by the Holy Spirit... JOY UNSPEAKABLE of knowing God and Jesus Christ—of knowing TRUTH—and the warmth of God's divine LOVE!...

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."... And what was Jesus' appearance? It was that of a human man, for he

also was the Son of man...

Most important of all however is what is God's nature—his CHARACTER—like? One cannot know what God is unless he know what his CHARACTER is!

THE CHARACTER of both God the Father and Christ the Son is that of spiritual holiness, righteousness and absolute perfection.

That character might be summed up in the one word LOVE, defined as an outflowing, loving concern. It is the way of giving, serving, helping, sharing, not the "GET" way.

It is the way devoid of coveting, lust and greed, vanity and selfishness, competition, strife, violence and destruction, envy and jealousy, resentment and bitterness...

God's law is spiritual and can be summed up in one simple but all-inclusive word—love. His law for the



guidance of human conduct is subdivided into the two great commandments, love toward God and love toward neighbor. These, in turn, are subdivided into the 10 Commandments. Jesus magnified this law by showing how its principle expands to cover virtually every possible human infraction...

Bear in mind the government of God is based on the LAW of God, which is the way of life of outflowing LOVE, cooperation, concern for the good of the governed...

Full comprehension of God's LAW (his way of life) is imparted by God through the Holy Spirit. But the law of God requires action and performance, and LOVE is the fulfilling of God's law (Rom. 13:10), and it can be fulfilled only by the love of and from God (Rom. 5:5)...

In the plagues God caused against Egypt, God was turning the Egyptian gods and objects of worship against them to show them that these were not gods. Even the plagues were sent in LOVE for the Egyptians...

A Christian must grow and develop in grace, spiritual knowledge and godly character... showing more love or outgoing concern toward others...

The very basic teaching, belief AND DOCTRINE OF God's true Church therefore is based on the righteousness of and obedience to the law of God. That law is LOVE. But it is not human love. Human love cannot rise above the level of human self-centeredness. It must be "the love of God...shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit]" (Rom. 5:5). Ancient Israel could not really obey God's law—they could have kept it according to the strict letter of the law. But since love is the fulfilling of the law and they had only human self-centered love, they could not have kept the law according to the spirit—because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given.

This basic teaching includes, therefore, all the "fruits of the Holy Spirit"—love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, etc.

The teachings of God's true Church are simply those of "living by every word" of the Holy Bible...

Men shall turn from the way of "get" to the way of "give"—God's way of love.

A NEW CIVILIZATION shall now grip the earth!

Proclaiming that new civilization is to come and be based upon love is a major part of what the true gospel of the kingdom is all about.

The Apostle Paul referred to part of it in one place as the "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Now what does love have to do with the Philadelphia remnant of the Church of God as represented by the *Continuing Church of God*? Notice the following passage:

1 Let brotherly love continue. (Hebrews 13:1)

The Greek word translated as "brotherly love" is the word Philadelphia. The writer of the Book of Hebrews may have been inspired by God to convey two concepts:

1. That brotherly love needs to continue amongst those who believe that they are Christian.
2. And perhaps that Philadelphia itself needs to continue, and it can do so, because of its emphasis on love.

It is important for all to realize that despite flaws of Christians, including those of us of the Philadelphia remnant, that love is what God's way of life and His kingdom are really all about. And that spreading that message of love and all of God's ways is what the *Continuing Church of God* wants to be about.

*This message was subject the first official Sabbath service of the Continuing Church of God which was held on December 29, 2013. ■*

# GERMANY WANTS ITS GOLD BACK

By Bob Thiel



It seems since many are now questioning the role of the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency, more are looking into other currencies as well as gold. Gold will set records in U.S. dollar terms. When the U.S. dollar totally collapses, people all around the world will consider that even if the Euro (or something similar) is strong, having a more gold-backed currency would be safer. The collapse of the U.S.A. dollar will shake a lot of the world's confidence in non-gold backed currencies.

Having the European power acquiring a lot more gold to back the Euro (even if the backing is only implied) or possibly other future European currency (that might potentially replace the Euro or even a basket of currencies) may greatly increase European credibility, prosperity, and influence around the globe. The fact that many in Germany are getting more interest in their national stock piles of gold is consistent with proper understanding of end time biblical prophecy. ■

Germany, which earlier removed its gold from London a while ago, is going to get more of its gold back:

Germany's central bank will relocate 54,000 solid gold bars, worth about \$36 billion, from deep underneath the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the Banque de France in Paris to the safe confines of German soil — vaults at the Bundesbank's Frankfurt headquarters. ( <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/01/16/why-germany-wants-its-674-tons-of-gold-back/>)

Officials at the Bundesbank indicated they have no intention of selling gold, but acknowledged the move is "preemptive" in case a "currency crisis" hits the European Monetary Union. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/afontevicchia/2013/01/16/germany-repatriating-gold-from-ny-paris-in-case-of-a-currency-crisis/>

Biblical (Daniel 11:40-44) and non-biblical prophecies point out that the final leader that the Bible calls the King of the North, who will likely have Germanic/ Assyrian heritage (cf. Daniel 11:30 with Numbers 24:24), will value gold.



# VALENTINE'S DAY: SHOULD CHRISTIANS OBSERVE IT?

By Bob Thiel



Throughout the world, February 14th is often celebrated as "Valentine's Day." What is the truth about "Saint Valentine's Day"?

Notice what a 2008 news item correctly reported:

St. Valentine's Day — a day to declare your affection for that special someone.

And what did Saint Valentine have to do with love notes and affection? Absolutely nothing! In fact, there's a good chance he may never have existed. You see, at least according to most accounts, the day was begun by the residents of ancient Rome who wanted to honor the she-wolf that had raised Romulus and Remus. It was Romulus who founded Rome, after killing his brother Remus in a fit of rage. At least that's the story they've been telling over the centuries.

However the Christian church leaders in Rome didn't like the celebration. Too pagan-like, they said. But, knowing the celebration was too popular for them to end, they gave it some Christian respectability instead. They decided since it coincided with St. Valentine's feast day they would call it St. Valentine's Day (Brown P. Origin of Valentine's Day may surprise us. The Enid News & Eagle, Enid OK, Published: January 16, 2008 12:49 am. [http://www.enidnews.com/opinion/local\\_story\\_016004906.html](http://www.enidnews.com/opinion/local_story_016004906.html) viewed 01/17/08).

Yet the improperly named magazine, *Christianity Today*, reported:

Civilizations have celebrated Valentine's Day for millennia, but even so, on February 14, we seem ready to celebrate love once again. Here are some articles on the holiday's Christian history, thoughts on love, and ways to show your Valentine how much you care.

"Civilizations" of the world certainly "have celebrated Valentine's Day for millennia," but real Christians have not. On that page with that claim there was also an ad for "The perfect gift for your Valentine!"

How commercially convenient.

The Apostle John was inspired to write:

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17, NKJV)

Valentine's Day is a worldly holiday, essentially built upon lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It will pass away; it is not a true Christian holiday.

In 2009, *Christianity Today's* Valentines from Heaven article began with:

*How God reminded nine singles of his love for them on Valentine's Day*

Since I'm single, I spent February 14 trying to concentrate on the fact that God is my valentine... (Valentines from Heaven. Christianity Today. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/singles/newsletter/responses-valentine.html>, viewed 2/12/09)

The above page had an ad that attempted to sell some type of dating service. Would God want to be viewed as a Valentine?

In 2007, *Christianity Today's* History of Valentine's Day article began with:

St. Valentine was actually two people (that weren't romantically involved) who were martyred on the same day (c. 270). Feasts commemorating them were celebrated on February 14. One was a priest and physician who died in Rome during the persecution of Christians by Claudius II Grothicus. The other was the bishop at Terni, Italy who was also martyred in Rome. Both have been buried at different places along the Flaminian Way (History of Valentine's Day. Christianity Today. 1999. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/holidays/valentines/features/history.html>, January 31, 2004).

The *Christianity Today* article above never mentioned the pagan origins of the holiday. The closest it comes is by stating:

So why do people send "valentines" or "love-tokens" to one another on that day? The origin of that tradition is not thought to have any connection with the saint's day. Rather it comes from an early European belief that the second week of February was when birds began to mate. The idea suggests that lovers should probably

exchange notes and gifts on February 14 in conjunction with what nature practiced. It then concludes with “Nowadays, Valentine’s Day is observed as a special day for love and romance. This topic is one of the oldest, and probably most-discussed, issues in history! As Christians, we know that love originates from God and that God is love (1 John 4:16).

That is the history of Valentine’s Day? Is that what *Christianity Today* believes Christians should know about that day? Are the customs associated with Valentine’s Day truly biblical? Or does the Protestant world wish to obscure the truth? Did *Christianity Today* intentionally leave the whole truth out?

Perhaps.

However, if one looks further, one will realize that although in every recent year *Christianity Today* tries to sell gifts related to Valentine’s Day on the internet, it has had an article that admits the following:

There are more tales of the “origins” of Valentine’s Day than arrows in Cupid’s quiver. As expected, most have something to do with pagan ritual (pretty much every holiday—from Christmas to Mother’s Day—has *something* to do with pagan ritual). Four centuries before Christ, Romans had a day called Lupercalia. Without going too much into it, I’ll sum it up as a sexual lottery. Pull names out of a box at random and couple with a young member of the opposite sex. After a year, you get to pick another name (Olsen T. Then Again Maybe Don’t Be My Valentine. *Christianity Today*. February 12, 1999).

So, Valentine’s Day was originally a sexual lottery according to *Christianity Today*. Yet, despite knowing that much of the truth, in 2012 (like it did in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011) *Christianity Today* still promoted and tried to sell gifts for Valentine’s Day.

## What are The Origins of Valentine’s Day?

Even the old *World Book Encyclopedia* (Valentine’s Day. Volume 19. 1966, pp.205-206) states:

...the customs of the day have nothing to do with the lives of the saints. They probably come from an ancient Roman festival called *Lupercalia* which took place every February 15. The festival honored Juno, the Roman goddess of women and marriage, and Pan, the god of nature...The Romans celebrated their feast of Lupercalia as a lovers’ festival for young people. Young men and women chose partners for the festival by drawing names from a box...**After the spread of Christianity, churchmen tried to give Christian meaning to the pagan**

**festival.** In 496, Pope Gelasius changed the Lupercalia festival of February 15 to Saint Valentine’s Day February 14. **But the sentimental meaning of the old festival has remained to the present time.** Historians disagree about the identity of St. Valentine”.

Furthermore it also states:

“**LUPERCALIA**...was celebrated on February 15 in honor of Faunus, a rural Italian god. Faunus was later identified with Pan, the god of herds and fertility...Priests...ran around striking all the women they met (Lupercalia. Volume 12. 1966, p.456).

The pagan being named Cupid (a supposed son of Venus) was also involved. According to pagan mythology, anyone being hit by Cupid’s arrow falls in love with the first person he/she sees. One source was bold enough to state:

The church replaced elements of various love-gods (Juno Februata, Eros, Cupid, Kama, Priapus) with St. Valentine, an imaginary Christian. A number of contradictory biographies were created for him...By taking over some of the features of the Pagan gods and goddesses, St. Valentine became the patron saint of lovers...St. Valentine’s Day can be traced back to Lupercalia, the Roman “festival of sexual license” (ST. VALENTINE AND VALENTINE’S DAY, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/valentine1.htm>, February 6, 2004).

Notice what the Roman Catholics teach:

The roots of St. Valentine’s Day lie in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was celebrated on Feb. 15. For 800 years the Romans had dedicated this day to the god Lupercus. On Lupercalia, a young man would draw the name of a young woman in a lottery and would then keep the woman as a sexual companion for the year (The Origins of St. Valentine’s Day. <http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/ValentinesDay/origins.asp>, January 31, 2004).

It is of interest to note that the same Catholic source states:

*The Catholic Church no longer officially honors St. Valentine, but the holiday has both Roman and Catholic roots.*

Does Valentine’s Day sound like a holy festival of love or a pagan holiday of lust?

## More on the Origins of Lubercus, Now Known as St. Valentine’s Day

Notice the following:

**The Feast of Lupercus** The first interpretation has this celebration originating as a pagan tradition in the third century. During this time hordes of hungry wolves roamed outside of Rome where shepherds kept their flocks. The God Lupercus, was said to watch over the shepherds and their flocks and keep them from the wolves. Every February the Romans celebrated a feast called Lupercalia to honor Lupercus so that no harm would come to the shepherds and their flocks. Also during Lupercalia, but in honor of the goddess Juno Februata, the names of young women were put into a box and names were drawn by lot. The boys and girls who were matched would be considered partners for the year, which began in March. This celebration continued long after wolves were a problem to Rome.

--- **St. Valentine's Day** As Christianity became prevalent, priests attempted to replace old heathen practices. **To Christianize the ancient pagan celebration of the Feast of Lupercus, the church officials changed the name to St. Valentine's Day.** To give the celebration further meaning and eliminate pagan traditions, priests substituted the drawing of Saints names for the names of the girls. On St. Valentine's Day the priest placed saint's names into an urn or box. The young people then drew a name from the container. In the following year, the youth was supposed to emulate the life of the saint whose name he had drawn. By the fourteenth century they reverted back to the use of girl's names. In the sixteenth century they once again tried to have saintly valentines but it was as unsuccessful as the first attempt. While it can't be proved historically, there were seven men named Valentine who were honored with feasts on February 14th. Of these men, two stories link incidents that could have given our present day meaning to St. Valentine's Day.....February 14th -

**The Day the Birds Began to Mate** The Europeans also believed that on February 14th the birds began to choose their mates. In fact Chaucer, in his "Parlement of Foules," wrote: "For this was Seynt Valentine's Day when every foul cometh ther to choose his mate"...The tradition of birds choosing their mates on St. Valentine's Day led to the idea that boys and girls would do the same. Now when a youth drew a girl's name, he wore it on his sleeve, and attended and protected her during the following year. This made the girl his valentine and they exchanged love tokens throughout the year. Later this was changed to only men giving love tokens to females, usually without names but signed "with St. Valentine's Love." Later, in France, both sexes drew from the valentine box. A book called *Travels in England*, written in 1698, gives an account of the way it was done: On St. Valentine's Eve an equal number of Maids and Bachelors get together, each writes their true or some feigned name upon separate billets, which they roll up

and draw by way of lots, the Maids taking the Men's billets, and the Men the Maids'; so that each of the young Men lights upon a Girl that he calls his Valentine, and each of the Girls upon a young Man which she calls hers. By this means each has two Valentines--but the Man sticks faster to the Valentine that is fallen to him than to the Valentine to whom he is fallen. Fortune having thus divided the company into so many couples, the valentines give balls and treats to their mistresses, wear their billets several days upon their bosoms or sleeves, and this little sport often ends in Love. This ceremony is practiced differently in different Countries, and according to the freedom or severity of Madame Valentine. This is another kind of Valentine, which is the first young Man or Woman chance throws in your way in the street, or elsewhere . . . (The Origins of Valentine's Day. <http://www.techdirect.com/valentine/origin.html>, January 31, 2004).

Anyway, the preceding article mentions those three as the possible origins of Valentine's Day. Actually all three of those are to some degree correct (and *World Book Online*, in its article Valentine's Day--which I checked on February 6, 2004--says that some believe that all three played a role in the origins)--Valentine's Day was a pagan holiday that the Catholic Church modified and that most Protestants embrace, which is probably why some Europeans also declared that to be the day the birds mated (birds mate pretty much every day in some part of Europe, so it seems disingenuous to coincidentally declare it on February 14).

Thus, much of *Christianity Today's* version of the "History of Valentine's Day" appears to be a selective Protestant fantasy.

But the most likely beginning of the "holiday" seems to have to do with the beginning of the Roman Empire, and probably is prior to the third century:

Archaeologists say they have unearthed Lupercal--the sacred cave where, according to legend, a she-wolf nursed the twin founders of Rome and where the city itself was born.

The long-lost underground chamber was found beneath the remains of Emperor Augustus' palace on the Palatine, a 230-foot-tall (70-meter-tall) hill in the center of the city...

According to myth, Lupercal is where a she-wolf suckled Romulus and Remus, the twin sons of the war god Mars and mortal priestess Rhea Silvia, who had been abandoned in a cradle on the bank of the Tiber River...

Every year on February 15 ancient priests killed a dog

and two goats and smeared the foreheads of two boys from noble families with the sacrificial blood as part of the Lupercalia celebration. (Valsecchi, Maria Cristina. Sacred Cave of Rome's Founders Discovered, Archaeologists Say. National Geographic News. January 26, 2007 <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/01/070126-rome-palatine.html>)

Of course, the story of Romulus and Remus is really the fable about the beginning of the Roman Empire--now that Europe is once again trying to revive this empire, I am sure that its leaders are pleased to have located what some call "the sacred cave."

## Is Valentine's Day A Holiday in Honor of "The Queen of Heaven"?

Another source adds:

The roots of Valentine's Day can be traced back to pagan festivals of third century Rome. February 14th was set aside as a day to honor the goddess Juno, who was the queen of the Roman gods and goddesses and was the goddess of women and marriage. This day was also the eve of the Feast of Lupercalia. This festival was in honor of the god Lubercus (The History of Valentine's. <http://www.christinescyberuniverse.com/VDay/VdayHistory.html>, January 31, 2004).

And who was Juno?

**JUNO** was the queen of heaven and wife of Jupiter (Zeus)...The ancient Greeks called her HERA (Juno. *World Book Encyclopedia*, Volume 11. 1966, pp.162-163).

A holiday for the queen of heaven!

What does God say about that?

...the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger?" says the LORD. "Do they not provoke themselves, to the shame of their own faces?" (Jeremiah 7:18-20, NKJV)

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: 'You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, "We will surely keep our vows that we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her." You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows!' "Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: 'Behold, I have sworn by My great name,' says the LORD, 'that My name shall no

more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "The Lord GOD lives.'" Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end to them" (Jeremiah 44:25-28, NKJV).

In other words, God was not happy that people wanted to worship the queen of heaven and He would punish them for it.

Another source mentioned:

The Feast of Lupercalia was celebrated in honor of the God Lupercus, who was said to watch over shepherds and their flocks and kept them safe, since during this time hordes of hungry wolves roamed outside Rome. The festival was celebrated on February 15 at the cave of the Lupercal on the Palatine Hill, where the legendary founders of Rome, the twins Romulus and Remus, were supposed to have been nursed by a wolf. However, other scholars, while not dismissing the celebration of Lupercalia, prefer to explain the celebration which took place in the middle of February as a celebration to the Goddess Juno Februato. It is to their thinking linked to Valentine's Day. While all scholars agree to the time when the practice of men drawing the names of women took place, there do exist slight differences in whose honor the celebrations took place. As time marched on, Christianity steadily gained converts and it became an officially supported religion in the Roman state under Constantine I, who ruled as emperor from AD 324 to 337. All pagan cults were prohibited in AD 392 by an edict of emperor Theodosius I. At this time, priests attempted to replace old heathen practices. The ancient pagan celebration of the Feast of Lubercus was renamed St. Valentine's Day. The priests replaced the practice of having men draw names of girls with having young people draw names of saints. The youths were supposed to emulate the life of the saint whose name they had drawn. The practice of this custom was unsuccessful at first and reverted back to the use of having men draw names of girls (The Myth of the Origin of Valentine's Day. <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/9300/stp.html>, January 31, 2004).

No matter if Valentine's is the Feast of Lupercus/Lubercus or Queen of Heaven Juno or both (which it probably is) it is NOT listed as a Feast of the LORD (see Leviticus 23).

(Furthermore, Jesus' mother Mary is also not the Queen of Heaven, for details, please see the article Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Apparitions available at [www.cogwriter.com](http://www.cogwriter.com).)



## Are Those Who Advocate Valentine's Day Like the Valentinians of Old?

Look at what was written about the group known as the Valentinians prior to the third Century:

The Valentinians, who are no doubt a very large body of heretics-comprising as they do so many apostates from the truth, who have a propensity for fables, and no discipline to deter them (therefrom) care for nothing so much as to obscure what they preach, if indeed they (can be said to) preach who obscure their doctrine. The officiousness with which they guard their doctrine is an officiousness which betrays their guilt. Their disgrace is proclaimed in the very earnestness with which they maintain their religious system...By the help of the sacred names and titles and arguments of true religion, they have fabricated the vainest and foulest figment for men's pliant liking...Not even to their own disciples do they commit a secret before they have made sure of them. They have the knack of persuading men before instructing them (Against the Valentinians. This treatise is professedly taken from the writings of Justin, Miltiades, Irenaeus, and Proculus. [Translated by Dr. Roberts.])

Is this not what the Protestant and Catholic worlds now do? Do they not have a propensity for fables? Did not *Christianity Today* obscure what they preach about 'Saint' Valentine's Day? Is this not a disgrace? By placing the biblical title 'Saint' as part of its title have they not fabricated the vainest figment for men's liking?

Many members of the Church hierarchy were Valentinus' followers, and the ordinary Christians had great difficulty to distinguish between the true Christian priests and the Valentinian Gnostics since their doctrine was so similar. The main difference resided in the Valentinian's different vision of the nature of God; this vision was incompatible with the structure and rule of the clergy that was emerging in the Catholic church. The Valentinians resisted this change and the Orthodox Christians imposed it" (7.2.2 Monotheism: 7.2 Christian Doctrine. [http:// www.nullens.org/a-review-of-historical-jesus-christ/part-7-the-nag-hammadi-documents/7-2-christian-doctrine/](http://www.nullens.org/a-review-of-historical-jesus-christ/part-7-the-nag-hammadi-documents/7-2-christian-doctrine/), viewed 01/28/13).

It may also be of interest to note that, "The chief sacrament of the Valentinians seems to have been that of the bridal chamber" (VALENTINUS AND VALENTINIANS. [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\\_Encyclopædia\\_Britannica/Valentinus\\_and\\_The\\_Valentinians](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Valentinus_and_The_Valentinians), viewed 01/28/13).

Perhaps I should add that Valentinus is the first one to write

that God existed in three hypostases--which is now a major part of the doctrine about the trinity.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that in Valentinus' theology all emanations from the heavenly Father are pairs of beings with male and female attributes. This has important psychological implications. Sexual pairing represents a state of submission, interdependence, and wholeness that makes possible the peace and bliss of Heaven...upon conversion Valentinian Christians {so-called} took part in sacraments that culminated in a divine marriage ceremony in which they were spiritually married to angels (Knight A. Primitive Christianity in Crisis, 2nd ed. A.R.K. Research, Antioch (CA), 2003).

The 'angels' in a sense were the converts' "Valentine."

Thus it is possible that the Valentinians MAY have had some influence in getting this 'holiday'. (It should be noted that the Roman Catholics claim there were three saint Valentines, and the holiday name probably came from one of them.) Even if the followers of Valentinus had no effect on this day, the day certainly reflects some of their basic ideas.

## Does God Approve of Using Pagan Practices to Worship Him?

Notice that the Bible repeatedly warns against using pagan practices to worship God:

29 When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, 30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' 31 "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. 32 Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; **you shall not add to it nor take away from it** (Deuteronomy 12:29-32, NKJV).

2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe (Jeremiah 10:2-3, KJV).

...abstain from things offered to idols (Acts 15:29, NKJV).

But because most who profess Christianity do not heed these warnings, they are disobeying God's instructions.

## Adopting Pagan Holidays Supports Islamic Positions!

Look at some of what the Muslims say about Valentine's Day:

Celebrating the Valentine Day is not permissible because: Firstly, it is an innovated holiday that has no basis in the Sharee'ah...Christians were aware of the Pagan roots of Valentine's Day. **The way the Christians adopted St. Valentine's Day should be a lesson** for Muslims. In fact, the failure to fully separate Valentine's Day from its pagan roots explains why Islamic scholars and a number of Muslims avoid adopting traditions of non-Muslims, even though they could possibly be Islamicized...**We should avoid anything associated with pagan immoral practices** -...- Islam does not encourage flirting or suggestions of romantic relationships before marriage - Love between families, friends and married people does not need to be celebrated on a day with such un-Islamic origins (Ruling on Celebrating Valentine's Day. <http://www.contactpakistan.com/news/news144.htm>, January 31, 2004).

What is the ruling on Valentine's Day? Firstly: Valentine's Day is a jaahili Roman festival, which continued to be celebrated until after the Romans became Christian. This festival became connected with the saint known as Valentine who was sentenced to death on 14 February 270 CE. The kuffaar still celebrate this festival, during which immorality and evil are practiced widely... Secondly: It is not permissible for a Muslim to celebrate any of the festivals of the kuffaar, because festivals come under the heading of shar'i issues which are to be based on the sound texts...Partially joining in, at the very least, is disobedience and sin...it is not permissible to celebrate the festivals of the ignorant and the mushrikeen (polytheists). (fatwa No. 73007. What is the ruling on Valentine's Day? <http://islamqa.info/en/ref/73007> viewed 02/04/12)

Notice that because of sexual immortality associated with Valentine's Day, many of the states in Malaysia have taken proactive steps to try to stop sinning then:

PAS Youth chief Nasrudin Hasan Tantawi said the Kedah, Kelantan and Selangor governments have directed all local authorities to work closely with police and Rela in order to carry out operations to check immoral activities during Valentine's Day...He said the National Fatwa Council forbids Muslims from celebrating Valentine's Day because of **elements of Christianity and sin**. (Move on Valentine's Day 'sins' Malaysia Star – Feb 9, 2011. <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2011/2/9/nation/8024821&sec=nation>)

Notice that the Muslims associate Valentine's Day with Christianity (obviously the false compromising kind) and sin.

In other words, Valentine's Day causes the name of Christ (through the term 'Christianity') to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24; Isaiah 52:5)!

Even the Muslims can see the hypocrisy in this.

How does this pagan holiday directly help get the true gospel out?

It does not.

And that is the point.

Valentine's Day includes elements of paganism, idolatry, and sexual immorality. Notice what the Bible teaches:

22...You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. (Romans 2:22-24)

1...there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. (2 Peter 2:1-2)

Does not the observance of Valentine's Day contribute to blasphemy by the Gentiles (at least the Muslim ones) because many who profess Christ keep it? This should never be.

### Concluding Comments: What is the true meaning of Valentine's Day?

What is the true meaning of Valentine's Day? The true meaning of St. Valentine's Day is that many people often ignore the instructions of God and embrace paganism in their lives. Not necessarily intentionally, but since the Bible is clear that Satan "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), Valentine's Day seems part of his plan to do that. That is the real meaning of Valentine's Day.

The Bible never indicates that Christians should celebrate anything like St. Valentine's Day. Thus, the celebration of Valentine's Day is not enjoined on believers--even if there is some controversy associated with some of the history of it.

The Bible is clear that God is not pleased with activities that honor the 'Queen of Heaven.'

Valentine's Day is NOT some attempt to share God's love.

It began as a pagan courtship and sex holiday. It is even an example to Muslims of how “Christianity” (falsely called) is sinful--this is no way to get the good news of Jesus out.

Although it has dropped some of its more direct pagan symbols, even today, the pagan being Cupid is associated with the Valentine holiday. The so-called ‘Christianization’ of non-biblical, pagan celebrations is an affront to God and causes His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24).

No professing Christian should take any part in such celebrations. ■

## 2012: THE YEAR OF EXTREME WEATHER

*By Bob Thiel*

The *New York Times* ran an interesting item related to the weather in 2012:

### 2012: The Year of Extreme Weather

The weather reports are in. 2012 was the hottest and the most extreme year on record in many places.

While parts of China are enduring the harshest winter in 30 years, the Antarctic is warming at an alarming rate. In Australia, out of control bushfires are partially the result of record-breaking weather (new colors were added to weather forecast maps, to account for the new kind of heat). In the United States, where Hurricane Sandy devastated parts of New Jersey and New York and where extreme drought still lingers in the Midwest, the average temperature in 2012 was more than a whole degree Fahrenheit (or 5/9 of a degree Celsius) higher than average – shattering the record. <http://blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/2012-the-year-of-extreme-weather/>

Back in 2009, Dr. Thiel’s book, *2012 and the Rise of the Secret Sect* mentioned the following was about to happen:

Odd weather patterns result in food shortages and natural disasters.	Matthew 24:7
The world is actually in a berserk transition, as the real age of peace is not yet here. It may be a period of chaos. It is the beginning of sorrows.	Matthew 24:8

Record heat and odd weather problems should serve as a wake-up call. Weather-related troubles with their related food issues, of course, have been biblically expected:



(Mark 13:8)

Weather will affect the U.S.A. and its Anglo-allies more than most realize. Furthermore, the debt situation of the U.S.A. is putting it at risk of being unable to recover should it be hit by even more severe weather problems, terrorist acts, war, riots, solar flares, severe earthquakes, civil unrest, devastation of their genetically-modified food supplies, food shortages, and/or various pestilences—an intensity of “sorrows” such as Jesus discussed in Matthew 24:4-8 leading up to the time of the Great Tribulation.

While some may consider all these weather extremes normal, they do seem to be consistent with the “sorrows” that Jesus warned were coming. And the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21) will happen not too many years after these sorrows began.

#### *Superstorm Sandy*

7...And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Matthew 24:7-8).

5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.” (Revelation 6:5-6)

8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.



# HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

*By Herbert W. Armstrong*

TODAY different church denominations take this sacred ordinance different ways. One church claims the bread and wine literally is transferred into the actual body and blood of Christ. Some churches take this "supper" every Sunday morning. Some take it once a month, in the morning. Others take it four times a year; and at night.

Truly, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).

There is but one way to get back to the plain truth once delivered to the saints, and that is to shelve our assumptions and traditions, and then with open mind diligently "search the Scriptures," the only true record of what was once delivered.

## **The First "Lord's Supper"**

Let us examine the passages showing the first institution of this ordinance.

Notice, in Luke 22:14, 19-20: "And when the hour was come, he [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with him....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. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Notice, it was "when the hour was come," that Jesus first introduced the bread and the wine. There was a definite time--a definite hour--when He held this supper, setting us an example.

Notice, too, He commanded them to observe it--THIS DO." And why? "In remembrance of me," Jesus said. It was, then, a MEMORIAL--in memory of His death. He instituted it on this tragic night, the very eve of His death.

In Matthew's account, we read, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread" (Matt. 26:26). It was "as they were eating" that He took bread and introduced

this solemn ordinance we call the Lord's supper. Eating what? Eating the Passover! (Verse 17, and Luke 22:15.)

Now notice Matthew 26:2. "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

Jesus knew His time had come. He was our Passover, sacrificed for us (I Cor. 5:7).

"Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?" (Matt. 26:17.)

After sundown (the days began at sundown) Jesus sat down with His twelve disciples in an upper room (Matt. 26:20; Mark 14:15).

And as they were eating the Passover supper (Matt. 26:26), "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

So we see that it was the night of the final and last Passover supper that Jesus introduced the New Testament "Lord's supper." To thoroughly understand the connection between the "Lord's supper" of the New Testament, and the Passover of the Old, let us make a quick examination of the Passover.

## **The Ordinance Under the Old Covenant**

The original Passover marked the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt. God had been pouring out the plagues upon Egypt, to induce Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. You will find the events recorded in the 12th chapter of Exodus.

On the 10th day of the first month (the Hebrew, or sacred year, began with the new moon in the spring, near the equinox, not midwinter), they were told to take a young lamb without spot or blemish, a type of Christ, the Lamb of God. This lamb was to be kept until the 14th day of the first month, Abib, when they were to kill it "in the evening" (verse 6). The literal Hebrew, margin, is "between the two evenings," and from the Jewish Encyclopedia we find this is the twilight period

between the time the sun goes down, when the new day has commenced, and the darkness when the stars are out. So the lamb was killed in the very beginning of the 14th of Abib.

As soon as it was killed, the blood was to be sprinkled over the doorposts of their houses. The lamb was to be roasted, and eaten in haste. At midnight that night the angel of the Lord passed through the land, striking dead all the firstborn of the land. But, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you," the Lord told the Israelites.

For seven days they ate only unleavened bread. The 14th of the first month, Abib, was the Passover, and the 15th was a feast day, or annual holy day (verses 15, 16 and Numbers 28:16, 17). The 15th was the first of seven days of unleavened bread, and the seventh of these, or the 21st of Abib, was also a holy feast day, or annual Sabbath, called a "high day" even still today by the Jewish people.

The lamb was killed as the sun was going down (Deut. 16:6), yet it was eaten in the 14th day (Lev. 23:5, 6), not after it was passed.

Year after year Israel continued to observe the Passover.

### **Instituted an Ordinance Forever**

Now notice Exodus 12:17, 24. The Passover was instituted an ordinance forever. Some will say circumcision was not done away, but was changed-- today it is in the heart (Romans 2:29). In both cases God meant forever, and so, as we have seen, at the last Passover supper Jesus changed the manner of observance of this ordinance. No longer do we kill a lamb and eat it, since the Lamb of God has been sacrificed once and for all. Instead, we take the bread, symbolizing His broken body, and the wine, symbolizing His shed blood, as a memorial, looking back to His death.

### **How Often Observed?**

Now notice Exodus 13:10, speaking of the Days of Unleavened Bread: "Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year." The time is once a year, at night, after the sun has set in the beginning of the 14th of Abib.

Jesus set us an example (I Peter 2:21), observing it at this set time once a year (Luke 2:42).

Suppose the Israelites in Egypt had observed this ordinance at some other than this set time? They would not have been saved when the death angel passed by that night! God does things ON TIME. He had given us an exact time for this ordinance. Jesus instituted it "when the hour was come."

### **The Ordinance of Humility**

In giving us the account of the instituting of the "Lord's supper" ordinance, Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the taking of the bread and wine. But John relates another part of this ordinance.

It is in the 13th chapter of John. Verse 1 shows the event is the last Passover. And, the supper being ended (verse 2), Jesus took a towel (verse 4) and began washing His disciples' feet (verse 5).

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (verses 12-15).

Many today do not want to humiliate themselves by washing the feet of their church brethren. Some argue that Jesus commanded only the disciples to wash one another's feet. But they will admit it was a command to them. Very well; turn to Matthew 28:19, 20:

"Go ye therefore," Jesus said to these same disciples, "and teach all nations, baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." So they were to teach US to observe all things whatsoever He commanded them. Surely God is no respecter of persons.

### **Kept Once a Year in the Apostolic Church**

Now notice I Corinthians 5:7, 8: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven...but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Paul gives directions regarding the Lord's supper in the 11th chapter of I Corinthians. Some have misunderstood verse 26, which says: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup," and interpret it to say "take it as often as you please." But it does not say that!

It says “as often” as we observe it, “ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” And Jesus commanded, “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me” (verse 25). We do it in remembrance Of THE LORD’S DEATH--a memorial of His death. And memorials of momentous occasions always are observed annually, once a year, on the anniversary of the event they commemorate. That is the way we observe the 4th of July, Armistice Day, etc.

Jesus instituted this New Testament ordinance on the eve of His death. It was the 14th Abib, Hebrew calendar. He was our Passover, sacrificed for us--and He was sacrificed on the same exact day of the year that the Passover lambs always had been slain. As the Old Testament Passover commemorated Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, a type of sin, so the New Testament Lord’s supper--a continuation of the Passover with different emblems--commemorates Jesus’ death, and our deliverance from sin. Immediately after that last supper, Jesus and His disciples went out to Gethsemane, where, later that night, Judas Iscariot led the bloodthirsty mob who seized Jesus, and led Him away to be crucified during the daylight part of the same 14th day of the month.

Jesus set us an example, and by following His example and observing this sacred ordinance at the same time He did--the same time the Passover always was observed, commanded to continue FOREVER--we do continue to remember His death, annually, on the very anniversary of His crucifixion. It is the most solemn and sacred occasion of the year--especially when observed at this correct scriptural hour.

Notice I Corinthians 11:27, 29. This is not speaking about a Christian being worthy or unworthy to take it. It is speaking of the MANNER in which we do it. To take of it unworthily is to take it in a wrong manner. Had the ancient Israelites in Egypt observed the first Passover at any time except the exact time appointed by God, they would have done it unworthily, and suffered the plague. Surely if we, once we see and know the truth, partake of this most sacred ordinance at any other time than that set apart in the Scripture, we would do it unworthily, and to our damnation. To take the bread and wine while not truly accepting the body and blood of Christ with the whole heart would be taking it unworthily and to one’s damnation. Let us observe it worthily.

## Example of the First Century Church

The first century Church of God, under the original apostles, continued to observe this solemn ordinance once a year at the set time.

The Days of Unleavened Bread were still being observed. Notice Acts 20:6: “And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread.” That was about 59 A.D.

Then notice Acts 12:3. The Holy Spirit inspired these words, to tell us the time of year: “Then were the days of unleavened bread.” That could not have been written had these days been done away and kept only by Christ-rejecting Jews.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established. Notice a third text, Acts 12:4. The word “Easter” is a mistranslation. The Greek word is Pascha meaning “Passover.” It is exactly the same word used for “Passover” in Matthew 26:2, 17, 18, 19. Many other translations faithfully render this “Passover” in this text, as it should be. So this text is, “intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people.” This was more than ten years after the New Testament Church had been established.

## The Meaning of “Break Bread”

Some churches turn to Acts 20:7--“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...” To them this says take the Lord’s supper every Sunday morning.

Let us examine this. Notice verse 6. This was just AFTER the Days of Unleavened Bread, when the “Lord’s supper” had been taken. Paul was holding a farewell meeting at Troas, ready to depart at sunrise. When was Paul preaching? It was not Sunday morning, but what would now be called Saturday night. It was between sunset, when the first day of the week commenced, and midnight (verse 7) and there were many lights burning (verse 8). But it was after midnight before they broke bread, when they were all getting hungry. Notice carefully in the 11th verse. “And had broken bread and eaten.” This bread-breaking was not the Lord’s supper, but eating a plain meal.

“Break bread” does not necessarily refer to the “Lord’s supper,” as some have carelessly assumed. Notice Acts 27:34, 35: “Wherefore I pray you to take some meat...

he took bread...and when he had broken it, he began to eat."

Notice Acts 2:46:"...And breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness..." Here they were breaking bread daily, eating meat, and Paul says if we eat to satisfy hunger at the Lord's supper, we do it to our condemnation (I Cor. 11:34).

Then notice Matthew 26:29. Jesus said He would not again take the New Testament "Lord's supper" until after His second coming in His Kingdom. Yet, later, as He sat "at meat," eating a meal, He broke bread and blessed it (Luke 24:30).

They then used a kind of bread such as is used in many European countries today, and instead of slicing, they broke it. "Break bread" was a common term to indicate eating a meal.

Let us return to the faith once delivered. Let us humbly and obediently observe this solemn, sacred ordinance as we are commanded, and at the time set apart in the Bible, after sundown on the 14th of Abib, or Nisan, sacred Hebrew calendar.

The first day of the new year begins near the spring equinox when the new moon usually is first visible to the naked eye at Jerusalem (not the United States). The Jewish calendar as used by Jews today is correct. But it must be remembered that "in the 14th day of the first month at even is the Passover, and in the 15th day of the same month is the feast." The Jewish people no longer observe the Passover on the 14th. They observe the FEAST--one night after the Passover, on the eve of 15th Abib. The "Lord's supper" or New Testament Passover should be observed after sunset on the evening before the Jewish people of today celebrate their feast.

*Note: The old Worldwide Church of God no longer exists and the group that took it over would not make Herbert Armstrong's writings available, even when I offered to pay. So the above article is shown in the public interest.*

### **Passover for 2013 and 2014**

Passover will be kept after sunset on the 24th of March 2013 and the 13th of April 2014.

## **THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

*By Bob Thiel*



### *Unleavened Bread*

In Leviticus 23:5-6, the Bible states, "On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread."

Similarly in Exodus 12:15,19-20 it states,

"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel...For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cutoff from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations you shall eat unleavened bread."

The Bible shows that the Days of Unleavened Bread are connected to Passover (Leviticus 23:5-6; Exodus 12:19-20; I Corinthians 5:7-8).

While most professing Christians are aware that I Corinthians 5:7 teaches that "indeed Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us", they do not seem to literally observe the verse that follows. "Therefore let



us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:8). Actually, most professing Christians do not seem to be aware that they are supposed to keep any biblical feast. There are many reasons, though, to so do.

Perhaps before going further, I should quote and comment the entire verse of 1 Corinthians 5:7:

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

Notice clearly that the Corinthians must have been observing the Days of Unleavened Bread because the Apostle Paul stated "you truly are unleavened." The problem that the Corinthians had was that they were not unleavened spiritually. That is why Paul continued and told them to also spiritually be unleavened "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." This is what the Bible shows that the Apostle Paul was teaching. Do you believe it?

Furthermore, in Romans 3:25 it states, "in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." Does this mean we are to continue in sin? Of course not! A few verses later Paul wrote, "On the contrary, we establish the law" (Rom 3:31). So while most understand that the Passover pictures a remembrance of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice (I Corinthians 11:24-26), many seem to not understand that we are not to continue in sin.

Why?

Maybe one of the reasons is that they do not observe the Days of Unleavened Bread.

## Leaven

In the world, leaven is all around. Not only is it in baked goods, it is now in many other products. Leaven spreads and most of the items it becomes part of crumble. In the Bible, leaven normally pictures malice, wickedness, and hypocrisy (I Corinthians 5:8; Mat 16:6,12; Luke 12:1), while unleavened bread pictures sincerity and truth (I Corinthians 5:8). The Old Testament states, "no leaven shall be seen among you" (Deuteronomy 16:3),

whereas the New Testament states, "His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7) and that "sin is lawlessness" (I John 3:4).

Leaven pictures the teachings of the Pharisees (Mat 16:6,12; Luke 12:1) whom Jesus called hypocrites (Matthew 23:23,25,27,29). According to *Strong's*, the Greek word Jesus used that was translated as hypocrite means, "an actor under an assumed role". The Pharisees were false religious leaders who pretended to keep God's law, but really did not (Matthew 15:3-9).

Notice that leaven is a symbol of false doctrine and hypocrisy that Jesus warned against:

6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? 9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? 10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? 11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? — but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:6-12)

Jesus further described the Pharisees by saying, "you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:28). Jesus thus tied leaven (the Pharisees teachings, Matthew 16:12) to false religion (being hypocrites) and sin (since "sin is lawlessness", I John 3:4).

Physically, leavening agents include yeast, bicarbonate of soda (baking soda), and baking powder. Physically, leavening agents "puff up" grain containing products and make them look larger than they would be otherwise. Since the Bible teaches:

15 On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses (Exodus 12:15).

Those who attempt to obey God follow this and remove most breads, crackers, etc. from their houses, clean out their toasters, and otherwise remove physical leaven from their lives just prior to the start of the Days of Unleavened Bread each year. Since the removal involves work, and the term for day in Exodus 12:15 is *Miyowm* (Interlinear Transliterated Bible. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.) which is different than the Hebrew term for day, *Uwbayowm*, in Exodus 12:16 (despite the fact that Strong's uses the same number, 3117, for both words)--this suggests that the removal perhaps should be done before the start of the first day, which is a holy convocation. And this is consistent with other statements in Exodus such as for all of the "seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses" (Exodus 12:19) and "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters" (Exodus 13:7). The only way for no leavened bread to be seen in one's quarters for those seven days is if it is gone prior to the start of those seven days.

In Exodus it states that the Days of Unleavened Bread, "shall be a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth" (13:9). Keeping seven days of unleavened bread pictures that we are to live in sincerity and truth by keeping God's law--that we are not continue in false religion, not to continue in sin.

Why seven days?

In the Bible God seems to use the number seven to show completeness. There are seven days in a week (Exodus 20:6), seven days of creation (Genesis 1), seven Churches in Rev 2&3, seven candlesticks (Revelation 1:20), seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34), etc. The seven Days of Unleavened Bread seem to picture that after our sins have been forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus (Romans 3:25, I Corinthians 5:7), that we are to no longer continue in the old ways but to walk in the true ways of the Bible (I Corinthians 5:8). The Days of Unleavened Bread help us to understand that sin is to put out of our lives; throughout the year it reminds us that false religion is all around and needs to be avoided.

People who do not keep the Days of Unleavened Bread

are not reminded about false religion and sin through this symbol during the year; maybe they do not want to be.

## A Warning

Now it is interesting to note that Jude warned that, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

This is interesting because in the next verse he ties this problem with deliverance (from Egypt) during the Days of Unleavened Bread (which should be kept as an annual reminder of sin and deliverance, Exodus 13:3-10, I Corinthians 5:8).

"But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 5). In like manner, just because of the sacrifice of Jesus "God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Romans 3:25), he may afterward destroy "those who did not believe." How do you know if you truly have faith and believe? By doing what God says.

James warned, "You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead (James 2:19-20). In a similar way Paul wrote, "for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified" (Romans 2:13). Paul also warned, "For if we sin willfully after we have received knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation" (Hebrews 10:26-27).

Like the Old Testament (Exodus 12:15,19), the New Testament teaches us "Therefore purge out the old leaven" I Corinthians 5:7. From a physical standpoint it is easy to not obey these teachings. Physically it is easier not to purge or remove all the leaven from our dwellings. But spiritually, by not keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, many fail to understand that they

have to live the way of life that Jesus taught--many accept a false outward religion! Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). By not keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, many have fallen for a religion based upon traditions of men instead of God's commands!

## The Bible vs. 'Traditions of Men'

Believe it or not Jesus ran into the same problem in His day. The religious rulers (the Pharisees) were condemned because "you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:6). Although traditions of men say that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for keeping the law, the opposite is true. Remember that Jesus said to them that "inside you are filled with lawlessness and hypocrisy" (Matthew 23:28). Actually, they pretended that they believed the Bible, but taught that their understandings (hermeneutics in modern terms) were more important than the literal commands in the Bible (Mark 7:8-9).

This problem exists even to our day.

Many professing Christians believe God's laws and Holy Days are no longer in effect even though all the ten commandments are specifically enjoined in the New Testament and all the biblical Holy Days are mentioned after the crucifixion of Jesus (unleavened bread is also mentioned before Mount Sinai in Genesis 19:3).

The Apostle Paul warned:

7...Who hindered you from obeying the truth?  
8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump (Galatians 5:7-9).

Paul was warning Christians that they should not allow a little compromise with the world (apparently including arguments of friends/acquaintances) should affect them. Christians who kept the Days of Unleavened Bread understood that then, and still understand that today.

Jesus warned, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in

Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'" (**Jesus is talking about those who claims to be Christians!**) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:21-23).

In addition to I Corinthians 5:7-8, we can see that the Days of Unleavened Bread were still to be kept after the crucifixion. In Acts 12:3, it says that, "Now that was during the Days of Unleavened Bread". It does not say that these days were done away. Also, Luke wrote,

6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6).

Now Philippi was (according to *Smith's Bible Dictionary*) a gentile town. It was in Macedonia and was ruled by the Romans. Thus, in at least two places in the New Testament, in gentile areas, we see that the Days of Unleavened Bread were to be kept (I Corinthians 5:7; Acts 20:6). If Christians were not to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread, why didn't Luke or Paul say so? Why did Paul say to keep them?

## What Some Say

The Worldwide Church of God officially used to teach and keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. But no longer. In the February 1999 issue of its official publication *The Worldwide News* (WWN), it contained the following information in an article written by Don Mear:

"We knew that Jesus commanded us to "eat his flesh and drink his blood" by taking the bread and wine of communion. And we understood that in doing so we were partaking of the Lamb of God. We did it annually because we saw the Lamb of God as being the Passover lamb, and we knew that the Passover was an annual observance. But Jesus is more than just the Passover lamb...The author of Hebrews pointed out that we Christians "have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat." His **implication** is that just as they had their altar to eat from, we have our own altar to eat from. And **by extension**, as freely as they ate from theirs, we may eat from ours. This **points us to the conclusion** that Christians, who under the new covenant, are a nation of priests (1 Pet. 2:9), may eat of the sacrificial Lamb of God just as

freely and frequently as did those priests of the old covenant. **We are not restricted to eating the Lamb of God only once a year, any more than they were.** Jesus is always our sin offering; he is always our guilt offering; he is always our peace and thank offering...Thank God our Father for the communion he gives us with himself in his beloved Son!"

Although the preceding quote suggests otherwise, the fact is that priests only ate the Passover once per year.

If the Days of Unleavened Bread were always kept in conjunction with Passover (which they always are in the Bible), then the sort of logic in the *WWN* article would be shown to be false. If every time one consumed the symbols representing body and blood of Jesus, they also had to keep seven days of Unleavened Bread and this was done weekly, then those so doing would never consume regular bread!

Now for those that argue that keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread is just a physical thing, there are two points to consider: the point of purging leaven out is to have sin out of our life (which is spiritual) and consuming the "Lamb of God" is also physical (with spiritual implications). Doing one without the other reminds me of certain Asiatic religions which feel that spinning a prayer wheel is equivalent to spending hours in prayer. Those followers probably at least think about some deity before they spin the wheel, but is that how God really wants to be worshiped? Does He approve of other "traditions of men" over His word?

Now it is true that leaven is not always shown to be bad. Jesus even stated, "the kingdom of God...is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures till it was all leavened" (Luke 13:20-21). This parable seems to illustrate that, even though the leaven was at first hidden, in the future all will know the true religion. Which is consistent with Habakkuk 2:14, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." Thus, leaven may be a symbol of false religion now, but true religion in the future.

## Did Early Christians Keep the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Jesus kept the Days of Unleavened Bread. And while He often did that in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 2:21; 22:1), He also seemed to have kept the Days of Unleavened Bread in or near Galilee (Luke 6:1, Clarke's Commentary on the Bible).

Some may wonder if early Christians kept the Days of Unleavened Bread. Well, as shown before, Paul taught that they should. But what about others?

One theologian reported:

To the first Christians the yearly recurrence of the Passover must have brought vivid memories of all that had happened at the Passover of A.d. 29. These associations soon gave a Christian meaning to the very word Pascha. 'Christ our Pascha is sacrificed for us,' wrote S. Paul; and the Sacrifice and Resurrection, remembered at first, perhaps, together with the night of the Exodus, soon became the chief and only reason for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Gorham ES. History of the church to A.D. 325. 1905. Original from Columbia University, Digitized Aug 14, 2009, pp. 129-130)

And while Jesus apparently was crucified a year or two later and there are multiple reasons to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it is true that the faithful have kept it from the earliest times and that they have understood that Paul's writings also support this.

A very old document, that was probably altered in the 4th century, titled The Life of Polycarp, specifically mentions the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost. Notice that it shows that the Apostle Paul endorsed keeping them:

In the days of unleavened bread Paul, coming down from Galatia, arrived in Asia, considering the repose among the faithful in Smyrna to be a great refreshment in Christ Jesus after his severe toil, and intending afterwards to depart to Jerusalem. So in Smyrna he went to visit Strataeas, who had been his hearer in Pamphylia, being a son of Eunice the daughter of Lois. These are they of whom he makes mention when writing to Timothy, saying;



Of the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice; whence we find that Strataeus was a brother of Timothy. Paul then, entering his house and gathering together the faithful there, speaks to them concerning the Passover and the Pentecost, reminding them of the New Covenant of the offering of bread and the cup; how that they ought most assuredly to celebrate it during the days of unleavened bread, but to hold fast the new mystery of the Passion and Resurrection. For here the Apostle plainly teaches that we ought neither to keep it outside the season of unleavened bread, as the heretics do, especially the Phrygians...but named the days of unleavened bread, the Passover, and the Pentecost, thus ratifying the Gospel (Pionius. Life of Polycarp, Chapter 2. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp.488-506).

Notice that the Apostle Paul was teaching Gentiles to keep these days.

Furthermore, Polycarp kept the Days of Unleavened Bread, various "Jewish holidays," and even went to Rome and told the bishop there to keep Passover on the correct day (this is documented in the article Polycarp of Smyrna: The Heretic Fighter). Polycarp is considered to be a saint by Catholics, Orthodox, many Protestants, and those in the Church of God. Yet of those groups, only the real Church of God continues his practices as far as the Holy Days are concerned.

Notice what the Catholic writer Eusebius recorded that Polycrates of Ephesus, around 195 A.D. wrote the following to the Roman Bishop Victor who, as the previous writing showed, wanted all who professed Christ to change Passover from the 14th of Nisan to Sunday:

We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and,

moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papirius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man' (Eusebius. Church History, Book V, Chapter 24. Translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Excerpted from Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series Two, Volume 1. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. American Edition, 1890. Online Edition Copyright © 2004 by K. Knight).

Notice that Polycrates said that he and the other early church leaders (like the Apostles Philip and John, and their successors like Polycarp, Thraseas, Eumenia, Sagaris, Papirius, Melito) would not deviate from the Bible, and that they knew the Bible taught them to keep the Passover on the correct date, and not on a Sunday. Also notice that they ***always observed the day when the people put away the leaven***. Polycrates also reminded the Roman bishop that true followers of Christ "obey God rather than men."

Notice what a respected Protestant scholar reported about the second century:

The most important in this festival was the passover day, the 14th of Nisan...In it they ate

unleavened bread, probably like the Jews, eight days through...there is no trace of a yearly festival of the resurrection among them...the Christians of Asia Minor appealed in favor of their passover solemnity on the 14th Nisan to John (Gieseler, Johann Karl Ludwig. A Text-book of Church History. Translated by Samuel Davidson, John Winstanley Hull, Mary A. Robinson. Harper & brothers, 1857, Original from the University of Michigan, Digitized Feb 17, 2006, p. 166).

So, like the Apostle John (the last of the original apostles to die), the early faithful Christians observed Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In the late third century, Anatolius of Alexandria wrote the following:

I am aware that very many other matters were discussed by them, some of them with considerable probability, and others of them as matters of the clearest demonstration, by which they endeavour to prove that the festival of the Passover and unleavened bread ought by all means to be kept after the equinox...

But nothing was difficult to them with whom it was lawful to celebrate the Passover on any day when the fourteenth of the moon happened after the equinox. Following their example up to the present time all the bishops of Asia—as themselves also receiving the rule from an unimpeachable authority, to wit, the evangelist John, who leant on the Lord's breast, and drank in instructions spiritual without doubt—were in the way of celebrating the Paschal feast, without question, every year, whenever the fourteenth day of the moon had come, and the lamb was sacrificed by the Jews after the equinox was past; not acquiescing, so far as regards this matter, with the authority of some...(THE PASCHAL CANON OF ANATOLIUS OF ALEXANDRIA. Chapters V,X, p. 415, 419).

This should be proof to any with "eyes to see and ears to hear" that some who professed Christ were keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread centuries after Jesus died. And did so on the 14th. Yet, could this have ended up being changed and called Lent? It may be so, even though Lent did not come from the Bible nor the

actual practices of the early Christians (see Is Lent a Christian Holiday?).

Canons 37 & 38 of the Council of Laodicea of the fourth century prohibited the observation of the unleavened bread and other festivals of the Jews and there was a similar condemnation in Canon 69/70 of the Syrian Apostolic Canons near this time (Seaver JE. Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire (300-438), Issue 30 of University of Kansas publications: Humanistic studies. University of Kansas Publications, 1952. Original from the University of Virginia, Digitized Apr 29, 2009, pp. 34-35). Hence this practice of Christians keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread also must have been going on then in Asia Minor and elsewhere--others scholars share that opinion (Seaver, p. 34; Bagatti B, Priest. The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 87-88).

Despite the fact that many later chose to observe Lent, the faithful continued to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread throughout history.

Adventist researcher Daniel Liechty reported Sabbath-keepers in Transylvania in the 1500s and later kept the biblical Holy Days (such as the Feast of Trumpets called Day of Remembrance below) (and those are days his church does not observe):

The Sabbatarians viewed themselves as converted Gentiles.. They held to the biblical holidays. Passover they celebrated with unleavened bread... The first and last seventh day of Passover were full holidays...There is no mention of circumcision, so it is unlikely that they practiced circumcision (Liechty D. Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century. Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs (MI), 1993, pp. 61-62).

Notice that in the 1600s, those who kept the days of unleavened bread were persecuted for their beliefs:

And finally, the tragic "Accord of Deés" or Complanatio Deesiana in July 1638 definitely disjoined Sabbatarians from Unitarians. Unitarians were ordered to worship Jesus, baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, and to allow their publications censured--a coerced "complanatio." The "Judaizers" and those who rejected and cursed Jesus, however, were excluded

even from the new amnesty. Sabbatarians were easy target of the new discriminatory law: they observed the Sabbath, therefore they farmed on Sundays, abstained from eating pork and blood, celebrated the Passover with unleavened bread, and refused baptism of their children--the very sign of their expected conversion" (Gellérd, Judit. *Spiritual Jews of Szekler Jerusalem A Four-Centuries History of Transylvanian Szekler (Székely) Sabbatarianism*. In *Literature of Memory VI: Hope and Despair* STH TS 870, Fall 2000 Professor Elie Wiesel. <http://www.unitarius.hu/cffr/papers/sabbat.htm--12/14/02>).

Note that the "Judaizers" are separate from "those who rejected and cursed Jesus". In this region, there were both true Christians (the "Judaizers" who celebrated the Passover with unleavened bread, etc.) and those who rejected Christ as Messiah (hence the Judaizers were not actually unitarian).

In the early 1600s, a Sabbath-keeper in the British Isles, named John Traske, wrote the following about observing some version of Passover and/or the resurrection:

'the fourteenth of the March moon' to coincide with the Jewish Passover, and should be followed by the eating of unleavened bread for seven days. (Falconer John. *A Breife Refutation of John Traskes Judaical and Novel Fanytyces*, pp. 57-58, as cited in Ball B. *Seventh Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800*, 2nd edition. James Clark & Co., 2009, pp. 49-50)

Christians have kept the days of unleavened bread throughout the church age.

## The Last Day of Unleavened Bread

The last day of Unleavened Bread is a Holy Day and, like the first day, is a time for a holy convocation:

6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days.

The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.'" (Leviticus 23:6-8)

We in the *Continuing Church of God* follow the biblical admonitions and keep the days of unleavened bread.

## In Conclusion

Although the Days of Unleavened Bread are first mentioned in the Old Testament, it is in the New Testament that we learn more fully that today's leaven pictures false religion and sin. The New Testament shows the connection between Jesus' Passover sacrifice and the removal of sin from our lives.

According to the New Testament and the records of historians, the original practice of the earliest Christians observed Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Christians, like some of the observant Jews, purge their homes of leaven prior to to sunset on the 15th of Nisan. And Christians avoid leaven for those seven days. This is something that the Bible teaches and early Christians practiced.

Will you follow those who followed Christ or do you prefer later adaptations?

By keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, Christians picture that they have heard the word of God, accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, try to put the word of God into practice, and have symbolically put false religion and sin out of their lives. By keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, Christians show that they are willing to obey God over the traditions of men. In conclusion, as is says in I Corinthians 5:8, "Therefore let us keep the feast."





**What's New?** There have been several developments related to the *Continuing Church of God* that may be helpful to have in one place.

During the month of January 2013, the following took place:

1. Scattered individuals contacted the *Continuing Church of God* and declared their intention to support it.
2. The official website of the *Continuing Church of God* went live. Its URL is [www.ccog.org](http://www.ccog.org)
3. The *BibleNewsProphecy* YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/BibleNewsProphecy>) got its first videos uploaded and has already had thousands of views.
4. The *ContinuingCOG* YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/continuingcog>) was created and had sermons uploaded to it. It has already had hundreds of views.
5. The 1974 public domain hymnal of the old Worldwide Church of God was uploaded and is now available for all (<http://www.youtube.com/continuingcog>).
6. Choral accompaniment of the 1974 public domain hymnal of the old Worldwide Church of God was uploaded and is now available for all (<http://www.ccog.org/choral-accompaniment-to-bible-hymnal/>).
7. Weekly letters to the brethren began and have provided a way to help electronically serve our scattered members (<http://www.ccog.org/category/letters/>).
8. Thousands went to Amazon Kindle and downloaded a free copy of Dr. Thiel's book *Barack Obama, Prophecy, and the Destruction of the United States*. The Kindle edition of that book contains links to the official and CCOG-related websites.
9. The *Bible News Prophecy* magazine was begun.

And of course, there were articles posted regularly at [www.cogwriter.com](http://www.cogwriter.com) and <http://www.cogwriter.com/news/> that were viewed by over 100,000. In January 2013, Dr. Thiel also had two newspaper interviews and three radio interviews to try to help fulfill Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20. ■

