

The *TRUE* Reason Why the Jews Rejected Christ

Why didn't the Jews understand the prophecies of Christ's first coming? Why weren't they ready to receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? The answer will surprise you!

by Herman L. Hoeh

EVER since the time of Adam man has rebelled against the government of God. As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has decreed that 6000 years be allotted to man to decide for himself whether he will voluntarily submit to the Government of God and keep holy the *time* He made holy.

Man universally has rejected God's rule, His authority, His holy days. But God has not been idle in human affairs.

What God Has Been Doing

What *God* is doing these 6000 years very few recognize.

Now is not the time God is trying to save the world. He is rather calling out of the world a select few whom He chooses. To us He reveals Himself, His Will and His Purpose. But we must *voluntarily* choose to obey Him — and to keep holy the days He set apart.

In the days of Moses God first organized His Church and revealed to them His Plan. To keep that Church in the knowledge of that Plan, the Eternal ordained seven annual festivals. These festivals pictured the seven steps in carrying out God's Plan.

When the Old Testament Church departed from celebrating these festivals, they lost the knowledge of the Plan. This is exactly what had happened to the Jews in New Testament times! The Jews did not understand the prophecies of the first coming of Christ because they were not keeping the one festival (Passover) which pictured that Christ was coming *first* as the paschal lamb. They knew He would come *later* — at the close of 6000 years of history (pictured by the Feast of Trumpets) — as the conquering King!

The Jews knew five out of the seven steps in God's Plan because they still observed five out of the seven festivals. But the two festivals on which they had become confused and divided pictured the very part of God's Plan which they had lost! The Passover pictured the coming of the Messiah as the passover lamb — to bear our sins (I Corinthians 5:7). Having changed the day of the true Passover the Jews cut themselves off from

their God. To change the day, to neglect it, is *sin*. And *sin* cuts one off from God. Hence they were unable to recognize the true gospel when it came to them through Jesus Christ. They were not expecting Christ, the Messiah, to come as a man to bear the sins of the world.

They were expecting only a conquering king. Had they been celebrating the true Passover on its right day, instead of confusing it with the Feast night of the days of Unleavened Bread, they would have known that their Messiah would first come as a man to bear the sins of the world!

No wonder the Jews crucified the Saviour! They had forgotten the true Passover!

How important it is that we today keep this day so we do not forget what Christ has already done for us!

And no wonder they did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were not properly keeping the day of Pentecost which pictured the coming of the Holy Spirit. Only those who were correctly observing these two days knew that the Messiah had come, who He was. Only *they* were ready to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It seems almost no one has really grasped the true reason why the Jews rejected Christ and ceased to be the Church through whom He could work in spreading the gospel.

It is only because we today keep these days—all of them—that we today know all the steps in God's Program.

Why Jews Lost True Dates for Passover and Pentecost

It is time we understand *why* the Jews forgot to properly celebrate Passover and Pentecost. Here is an important lesson in *Church Authority — God's Government* — which we today need to understand!

Granted the Jews preserved the Sacred Calendar. Granted that the Jews celebrated five of seven annual festivals on the correct date according to the Bible and the Sacred Calendar.

Why, then, did the Jews, who to this day have preserved the true calendar, celebrate *their* passover and *their* pence-

cost on different days from those plainly stated in the Bible?

The Jews in Judaea in Christ's day celebrated their passover one day later than did Jesus and the Galileans. The Pharisaic Judacans also ceased to *count* fifty days to determine the day Pentecost is to be celebrated. Why? How did the Jews become confused, divided?

What happened to *Church Authority*? Here are the facts!

Most Jews today celebrate *their* pentecost — or feast of first-fruits — on the sixth day of the third month, Sivan. According to Jewish tradition the day of Pentecost no longer needs to be counted. *Their* pentecost falls on a fixed day of the month, no matter what day of the week it occurs!

Yet Moses was inspired to write that Pentecost has to be counted (Lev. 23:15). Unlike every other annual festival, Pentecost does not fall on a set day of the month. It falls, rather, on variable days of the month, but on a specific and invariable day of the week!

The Jews in New Testament times became divided as to the correct time for celebrating this festival. Sadducees, who were mainly priests, still continued to count fifty days long after Pharisees, who were laymen in high places, fixed the festival on Sivan 6. Why?

Because *no authority* was exercised to keep unity in the Jewish community in New Testament times!

The apostles and faithful Jews in Galilee and throughout the world alone continued to celebrate Pentecost on a Monday, a fixed day of the week.

Also, Jesus and the Galileans observed Passover on Nisan 14, the correct day. The Jews in Judaea celebrated it one day late, on the night of the Feast, the 15th of Nisan or Abib. Today the Jews do not really keep any passover. They observe only the Feast. This is the real reason why the Jews as a nation forgot their God!

Now let us understand how it all happened. How the Jews became mixed up in their thinking. How people today can fall into the same snare when they begin to use individual human reason on

matters that pertain to the whole Church and hence are the responsibility of the ministry through which Christ governs His Church.

First, let's take the date of the Passover.

Why Different Passover?

Did you know that scholars are as much divided about the date of the Passover today as were the Jews in Christ's time? Even some in the Church of God during the Sardis Era of the Church became divided on this question.

The reason for every such confusion is the lack of the Government of God. The New Testament Church replaced the Old Testament Church because the Jews in Christ's day had not spiritually yielded to the Government of God. They followed their own traditions.

Centuries later, when Jesus Christ could no longer use the Sardis Era of the Church, He raised up *this work* — the Philadelphia Era of the Church of God (see Revelation 3).

We are not divided today because we follow the Government of God. "Thou...didst keep my word," says Jesus of *this Church* today (Rev. 3:8). We obey the Bible. We follow the example of Jesus. We do what He says. We submit to His government in the Church. Christ *is and will ever remain* the Head of this Church. He has promised it!

Now consider the facts of history — why the world generally believes that Christ died not on the Passover, but on the Feast — and who it is that first caused the world to believe this fable.

Did you know that it was Pope Leo — the first absolute Pope — who originated the idea that Christ died on the 15th of Nisan, not on the 14th, as the Bible makes plain? The same power that worked through him had already worked through the Jews and led them to deny that Christ is our real Passover! Jesus said of the Jews: "You are of your father the devil." And the world has followed his lies ever since! The devil wants people to deny Jesus is the Christ. And one of many ways is to delude them into thinking that Jesus did not die on the Passover, Nisan 14.

Pope Leo lived four centuries after the time of Jesus Christ. Here is what led up to his idea that Christ did not die on the true Passover. The Christian world was divided as to the date for Easter, which they had adopted from the pagans. Leo proposed to settle it. In so doing he wanted to stamp out the true passover altogether. To do so he had to make the Christian world believe that Jesus died on Nisan 15, not 14. "At the same time," declare Schaff and Wace on page 56 of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. xiv, "also was generally established, the

opinion so little entertained by the ancient authorities of the Church — one might even say, so strongly in contradiction to their teaching — that Christ partook of the passover on the 14th of Nisan, that he died on the 15th (not on the 14th, as the ancients considered) . . . In the letter we have just mentioned, Proterius of Alexandria openly admitted all these different points" — and the Pope officially approved the contents of the letter about 440 A.D.

And that is why the world believes what it does today!

But notice the plain evidence of Scripture now.

The Testimony of Scripture

The Scripture is our final authority. No man has ever been given any authority to replace it with human tradition. Here is what we find.

In Luke 22:8 we read: "And he (Jesus) sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover that we may eat." And in the last part of verse 13 we find: "And they made ready the passover." Now continue with the next two verses: "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

The next morning of this same day (a day begins at sunset), Jesus Christ was brought to trial and crucified. Late the afternoon of the same day, shortly before sunset, Jesus was buried. And in Luke 23:54 we read these plain words from the inspired Greek Text: "And it was preparation day; a sabbath drew on." Note that it was *a sabbath* according to the original Greek, not "*the sabbath*" as in the King James Version.

The women returned home, rested that sabbath following the day of preparation (Mark 16:1), then — two days after the Passover — purchased and prepared spices and — notice Luke 23:56: "And rested *the sabbath* day according to the commandment."

Here is the weekly sabbath mentioned. It was not one day after the preparation, nor two days after, but three days after that preparation day on which Jesus was killed. This plainly proves that Luke knew that Jesus was crucified on the day before an annual sabbath.

Since Leviticus 23 and many other scriptures prove that the *15th of Nisan is an annual holy day*, Luke plainly makes the crucifixion on the day before — that is, on the 14th of Nisan. Both Matthew and Mark agree with Luke, yet critics would have us believe that Luke had Jesus crucified on the 15th, an annual sabbath, the first holy day of the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread!

Plainly Jesus ate the Passover on the

eve of the 14th of Nisan, was seized, tried, crucified and buried on that same day, and was in the tomb on the 15th — that annual sabbath which followed the Passover.

The record of the apostle John agrees perfectly with this. In fact most critics acknowledge that John places the crucifixion record on the 14th. They think the other three gospel writers place it on the following day — thus *contradicting* one another! But there is no contradiction. Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree with John in plainly stating that the day following the crucifixion was a sabbath.

No Leaven Used with Passover

What the critics cannot get straight in their minds is that the Passover was also a day when Unleavened Bread was eaten. The Passover was always to be eaten with unleavened bread (Exodus 23:18 and 12:8).

There were seven days during which no leaven was to be seen anywhere in Israel — this is during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But also the 14th of Abib the children of Israel were to eat only unleavened bread with the passover and to use that day as a preparation in putting out all leaven and getting ready for the feast of seven days which followed. So there were *eight days* in all during which unleavened bread was eaten — one day with the passover and seven days with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

That is why Matthew, Mark and Luke speak of the Passover as *a day* of unleavened bread! It was not the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but the first of eight days on which unleavened bread was eaten. (In the King James Version the word "feast" is improperly inserted in Matthew 26:17. Notice that it is in *italics*.)

Also observe that Matthew records the conversation of the Jews' plot to kill Jesus. They said: "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." (Mat. 26:5).

There is absolutely no shred of evidence that Jesus was crucified on the 15th of Nisan. He was killed on the 14th as our Passover Lamb — on the very day the Passover Lamb was always slain. The Jews purposely avoided killing Jesus on the Feast — the 15th.

But now we must read John 18:28. On the morning of the 14th of Nisan the Jews refused to enter the judgment hall of the Roman governor, Pilate. Why? "Lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover."

So the Jews from Judaea had not eaten *their* passover yet! They were not observing it at the same time the Galileans ate it. Remember that Jesus and the dis-

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I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17). We, too, should follow this example of David, who has his guarantee of being in the Kingdom of God!

We should ask God's help to guide us in prayer. He will lead us to have real concern and love for all the brethren, for the ministers, and His work. We may even forget our own needs in losing ourselves in these other interests — but God will not forget *our* needs!

IF WE EACH PRAY ONLY FOR OURSELVES, ONLY ONE PERSON PRAYS FOR EACH OF US. BUT IF WE ALL PRAY FOR EACH OTHER THEN, THOUSANDS PRAY FOR EACH OF US.

Our prayer life will truly come *alive* as we learn to improve our attitudes.

It's Up to You

If we are continuing to have troubles, sickness, discouragement, unemployment and persecutions, we need to examine ourselves. God is not at fault! "But *your iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and *your sins* have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). *Listen to God's correction! Those who pray and refuse to obey what God says through His Word and His ministers, cut themselves off from their Creator and worship God in vain. Don't let this happen to you!*

This, then, is the key to overcoming our problems. God *will* hear and answer our pleas as he did David's. The answers will begin to come as never before, and real happiness, and a fruitful life of service to God will open before us. We shall find that we really know God as our Father in Heaven. Each moment spent in prayer with Him will be a moment of real joy to us! We should all read, if we haven't done so, Mr. Roderick Meredith's reprint article "The Answer to Unanswered Prayer."

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and *nothing shall offend them* [cause them to stumble]!" (Ps. 119:165).

The TRUE Reason Jews Rejected Christ

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ciples were from Galilee. Jews in Christ's time — those who lived in Judaea — kept *their* passover one day later than did Jesus, His disciples and the Galileans in general. Why did they do so? Where did the custom originate? Why were the Jews in Judaea observing their passover on a different day of the month than were the Jews living in Galilee?

Even Josephus, the Jewish historian, acknowledges that the Judaeans were celebrating the Passover at a different time than it was celebrated by Moses.

Notice what Josephus wrote about the Passover.

Confession of Josephus

Here is his account of the exodus. "In the month... which is by us called Nisan... on the fourteenth day of the lunar month... the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice... which we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was called the Passover. ... The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of the passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven days." (From *Antiquities of the Jews*, book III, chapter x, § 5.)

How plain. The Passover is the 14th and the seven days which follow are the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Josephus repeats the account of the Exodus in *Antiquities*, book II. Notice how he words the account here. "But when the fourteenth day was come, and all were ready to depart, they offered the sacrifice... Whence it is that we do still offer this sacrifice in like manner to this day, and call this festival *Pascha*, which signifies *the feast of the passover*; because ON THAT DAY God passed us over, and sent the plague upon the Egyptians; for the destruction of the first-born came upon the Egyptians THAT NIGHT" (chap. xiv, § 6). This was the 14th!

And on what day did they leave Egypt? "They left Egypt," declares Josephus, "on the fifteenth day of the lunar month" (chap. xv, § 2).

This agrees perfectly with Numbers 33:3. "And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month: *on the morrow after the passover* the children of Israel went out..."

Remember that Josephus plainly records that the Feast of Unleavened bread was celebrated for *only seven days* following the Passover on the 14th of Nisan. Yet Matthew, Mark and Luke show that it was customary to refer to the day of the Passover as the first of eight days of unleavened bread. Did Josephus also speak of eight days of unleavened bread, including the Passover? Indeed! In memory of the exodus he said to the Jews "keep a feast for eight days" (book II, chap. xv, § 1).

Sometimes the entire eight-day period was called "The Days of Unleavened Bread," and sometimes it was all called "The Passover," as in Luke 22:1.

If the Jews once knew that the sacrificing of the Passover lambs occurred on the eve or beginning of the 14th of Nisan, "between the two evenings," at dusk, and that God passed over them *that night* — the 14th — and that they left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan, why did the Jews in Judaea in Christ's time con-

fuse the events and celebrate the Passover one day late?

The answer has never been understood by the critics and the scholars. Here is what happened. Also read the series on *Judaism* by Ernest Martin in this issue.

After Ezra and Nehemiah

The Jews who returned under Ezra and Nehemiah correctly observed the festivals according to the law. They began each day at sunset. This custom continued until the Persian period of rule over Palestine ceased.

Then came the Greeks. New ideas began to be introduced. Judaism developed. It was a mixture of the Law of Moses and "Hellenism" — as Greek culture introduced under Alexander the Great after 333 B.C. was called. The eleventh chapter of Daniel tells us of the history of the Jews in Palestine for the next three centuries. First, Palestine was to be under the control of the King of the South. The King of the South was the Ptolemaic line of Greek rulers in Egypt. The Egyptians — under the rule of a Greek dynasty — began to force their particular brand of Hellenism upon the Jews in Palestine. The Great Synagogue was disbanded. The Jews were forced to take up the ways of the heathen — and that included *changing the time when the day begins*. Any encyclopedia will reveal that the Egyptians began their days with *sunrise*, not sunset. They therefore commenced each day about 12 hours later than the time God appoints.

So notice what would happen to the celebration of the Passover.

Jews began to neglect the law. The majority soon began to celebrate Passover in accordance with the Egyptian measurement of time. They therefore had to change the time for celebrating the Passover to meet the new custom of reckoning a day from sunrise to sunrise. Originally the Passover was celebrated at sunset, beginning the 14th of Nisan. But according to Egyptian reckoning *that sunset* would not be the beginning of the 14th, but midday of the 13th lunar month!

By Egyptian reckoning the 14th of a month began at sunrise, 12 hours late!

The dusk period "between two evenings" on the 14th of *an Egyptian day* would therefore occur at the *end* of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th day of a month as God reckons time! When this pagan method of time reckoning was forced on the people, the Jews in Palestine began to celebrate the Passover at dusk on the middle of the 14th day of *the Egyptian month*, 24 hours too late. It was in reality the beginning of the 15th day as God reckons time!

And that is how the custom began of

celebrating the Passover at sunset one day late. But the story does not end here.

The True Day Later Restored

At the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ the Jews had restored the beginning of a day to its proper point. The Galileans also restored the Passover, but the Judaeans were celebrating *their* passover on the 15th of Nisan!

What happened is this. After the Hellenized Egyptians were driven out of Palestine the Hellenized Syrians dominated Palestine until the Maccabees. The Maccabees were zealous Jews who drove out the Gentiles about 160 years before Jesus' birth. They were able to restore some of the practices of Moses, but they still compromised with the Gentile customs which the Jews had been practicing for generations under Greek, Egyptian and Syrian influence. The Jews restored the beginning of a day to sunset. But what were they going to do with the time of celebrating the Passover?

The Jews in Galilee, in the north of Palestine were far less influenced by Egyptian and Hellenic influences. They restored the beginning of each day to sunset and restored the Passover to its proper time at the *beginning* of the 14th of Nisan. But the Judaeans, who lived in and around Jerusalem and southern Palestine refused to change the custom of celebrating Passover in the middle of the Egyptian day at dusk—one day late.

The Judaeans decided to restore the day to begin at sunset. But they refused to change the hour for celebrating their passover. The traditions of the elders were too strong. The Judaeans henceforth decided to kill the passover lambs and to eat them at the same time of day they had been doing under Gentile Egyptian rule! And that is how the Jews in Judaea began to celebrate their passover at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th day of Nisan! And by so doing they rebelled against the government of God.

Jews Admit It

In 1948 I wrote to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, asking them for information on this very subject. The librarian replied to me that in Christ's time the Jews were divided over the Passover celebrations. The Jews, he wrote, had just recently (just before Christ) restored the beginning of a day to sunset. The Galileans, he admitted, had consequently restored the Passover to the beginning of the 14th as originally celebrated. But the Judaeans decided to continue their practice of killing the lambs one day later, at the beginning of the 15th so as not to change the customs they had followed while under Egyptian rule. If their elders had done so, they reasoned, they would continue to do so!

What Happened to Feast of Pentecost

The same conditions led to the celebration of Pentecost on the wrong day.

When the Greeks removed the Jews in the Great Synagogue from authority over the community, the problem arose as to who should determine the Feast of Firstfruits. Since there was no fixed authority, many of the Jews decided it would be better to have a fixed day of the month rather than be in doubt. Thus the Jews adopted the practice of designating Sivan 6 as the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover. But Pentecost is not fifty days after the Passover. It is fifty days after the day on which the wave sheaf is cut—and that always occurred on the first day of the week following the only weekly Sabbath which occurs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Notice Leviticus 23:11. "On the morrow after *the* Sabbath the priest shall wave it"—means the *weekly* Sabbath. Otherwise there would be no reason to count which day of the month Pentecost occurs.

Here is the proof!

Since the day the wave sheaf is cut could fall on Abib 20 (if Passover is on Monday), or on Abib 18 (if Passover is on Wednesday), or on Abib 16 (if Passover is on Friday), or on Abib 22 (if Passover is on the weekly Sabbath), you can easily see why Pentecost has to be counted.

In these four illustrations (for Passover Abib 14 can only fall on these four days of the week, beginning the evening before, of course), Pentecost—which is celebrated fifty days *after the day* the wave sheaf is cut and always falls on Monday—will be Sivan 11 or 9 or 7 or 13 respectively. That is why Pentecost must be counted.

There was no repentance among the Jews any more than there is today in the professing Christian world. There was no obedience to God. There were only the traditions of men! And the critics even to this day refuse to accept the plain words of Scripture that Jesus celebrated the Passover at its proper time on the eve of the 14th of Abib—the very day He was crucified. Carnal men uphold the tradition of Egypt and the doctrines of Judaism, not the Bible! The truth of God they refuse. They hate God's way. They refused to keep the Feast of Firstfruits—Pentecost—and that is why they were rejected as a nation.

Since 70 A.D. the Jews have also ceased altogether to observe the Passover. Today they make a pretense of keeping only the Feast of Unleavened Bread. At the Feast they have a lamb bone on the table as a solitary reminder of the original Passover which God commanded

Moses. Is it only the true New Testament Church of God which rightly celebrated Pentecost, and the Passover on the eve of the 14th of Nisan! "Do this," said Jesus "in remembrance of me." Are you really doing it?

Joyous PENTECOST

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who are the *firstfruits* must become more and more capable of *bearing responsibility* by using the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Two of our deacons who have shown exceptional growth and dedication gave sermonettes. Mr. Harold Treybig, deacon in the Houston church, made a comparison between the irresponsibility of false ministers and the need that we have to become *really responsible and trustworthy* in order to qualify to become priests and teachers in the Kingdom of God. Mr. Adolph Romike, deacon in Corpus Christi and President of the Spokesman Club, gave a very helpful sermonette on "how a Christian should love correction."

Although definite information on the Pentecost observance in Wichita, Kansas, is not yet available, Mr. Allen Manteufel reports that recent attendance in the new church in Wichita has risen to 185 and over nearly every Sabbath!

Pentecost at Springfield

"As God's work is always marked by continual growth and progress, so was the Pentecost meeting observed in Springfield this month.

"The Festival was held three full days, from the weekly Sabbath through Monday. Attendance was 277 Sabbath, 217 Sunday, and a *record number* for *Pentecost Day* of 407.

"A special event, unexpected by those present, took place Sabbath Day with the ordination of two greatly needed deacons. These men, Mr. L. E. Stuart and Mr. Sam Record, have been serving in the church doing the work of a deacon for some time. Their work has been a great help to the ministry in this area, requiring a considerable share of time which they have willingly given. Their ordination will aid them in doing this work and will certainly be an asset to the Springfield Church. Mrs. Stuart and Mrs. Record are also hard workers for the church, Mrs. Stuart generally being in charge of the food preparations on the Feast Days and Mrs. Record being in charge of the clothes fund for brethren in the local church.

"The sermons and sermonettes, the most essential spiritual food of the Feast Days, were especially applicable to daily spiritual growth and overcoming. Ser-