

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

Text Removed from the Revelation

In a letter to Dr. Earl L. Douglass dated March 9, 1959, Benjamin Adams, Head Pastor to the Trinity Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, gave a list of errors he had found in *The Urantia Papers*. One of the errors was a discrepancy on the sequence of events from the time of the ascension of Jesus on Mount Olivet to the day of Pentecost. These events are described at the end of *Paper 193 - Final Appearances And Ascension* through the beginning of *Paper 194 - Bestowal of The Spirit of Truth*.

As Adams stated for his item #3:

Pages 2057-60. The bestowing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is represented as occurring on the same day as the ascension and 40 days after the crucifixion. Now this is an obvious error as the very word "Pentecost" means 50 and was supposed to be a week of weeks after the Passover.

Refer to my brief tutorial on calendars and Jewish religious festivals attached to the end of this chapter.

The ascent of Jesus from Mount Olivet took place on the fortieth day after his crucifixion. This is confirmed in the Bible, Acts 1:3.

According to *The Urantia Papers* the apostles proceeded directly from Olivet to the city, whereupon began the events of Pentecost that same day.

But the ancient Pentecost was calculated at fifty days, not forty.

In his remark about a "week of weeks" Adams meant seven weeks, or forty-nine days.

Adams sent a copy of the letter to Sadler on the same date. In a letter dated March 17, 1959 Sadler replied thus:

Now as to the bestowal of the Spirit of Truth — the possible discrepancy between the end of one Paper and the beginning of another we all noted it one time and discussed it further when the Book was going to press. You should remember that the midwayers prepared a narrative that was many times larger than was finally given us as Part IV of the Urantia Book. It may be that in deletion some difficulties were encountered. Our understanding is that the prayer meeting which Peter conducts at the close of one Paper is not the same as that at the opening of the next Paper. The one ended at the Day of ascension, the other opened up the Day of Pentecost.

Sadler's argument is weak, almost foolish — based on the evidence of the Papers.

An attempt to explain the problem as a midwayer fault is specious. I, as a human mortal, would not make such a momentous error, yet Sadler resorts to weak human error as attributable to immortal beings. Such explanation was sadly inadequate to reality and to the evidence.

Sadler had good reason for assigning it to the midwayers. He fully believed the text was approved in the "third presentation," and that this approval came from the authors of the Jesus Papers, the midwayers.

The ancient Jewish observance of Pentecost was based on instructions given to Moses.

From *Vine's Expository Dictionary*:

pentekostos: Strong's #4005, an adjective denoting "fiftieth," is used as a noun, with "day" understood, i. e., the "fiftieth" day after the Passover, counting from the second day of the Feast, Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Cor. 16:8. For the divine instructions to Israel see Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-11.

The "Feast" was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The beginning of the Feast coincided with the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb on the evening which began the Passover.

Exod 12:14-21

"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD . . .

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread . . .

On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly . . .

And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread . . .

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, and so until the twenty-first day of the month at evening . . .

Then Moses called all the elders of Israel, and said to them, "Select lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the passover lamb.

(The ancient people were in conflict on the exact meaning of the Passover "Sabbath," and how to calculate the 50 days. Some understood the Sabbath, literally "day of rest," as the day of the Passover celebration. Others understood it to mean the first Sabbath after the Passover day.)

The Urantia Papers are well detailed on the movement of the apostles during the forty days between the crucifixion and the ascension, describing all the morontia appearances of Jesus. Specific dates with days of the week are given. Matt Neibaur, a serious student of the Papers, with scientific background, calculated sample dates to verify their technical accuracy, according to our present calendar, which is the calendar used in the *Papers*.

The Revelation states that the Crucifixion took place on a Friday. This day of the week appears to be confirmed in John's Gospel, 19:31. John said that particular Passover Sabbath was a "high day." Most biblical scholars understand that phrase to mean that the Passover in that year took place on a Saturday Sabbath, and not another day of the week. Hence, Friday was the eve of the Passover celebration for that year. According to Neibaur's calculations the Passover could occur on a Sabbath Saturday only on 7 April in the year 30 and 3 April in the year 33. The *Papers* give Friday, April 6, 30 AD as the date of the crucifixion.

If you follow the sequence of events from page 2057 you will find that Jesus ascended about 7:45 in the morning. P 2057, p 7.

The apostles then returned to the city.

Whereupon Peter called a meeting at the home of Mary Mark. By 10:30, 120 disciples had gathered. P.2057 - p 8.

Peter offered a thrilling report on the ascension. P.2058 - p1.

They went downstairs and cast lots to replace Judas. P.2058 - p2.

Paragraphs 3 & 4 on page 2058 are interspersed comments.

About noon they returned to the upper chamber. P.2058 - p5.

"And then Peter called all of the believers to engage in prayer, prayer that they might be prepared to receive the gift of the spirit which the Master had promised to send."

This statement on page 2058 is the last sentence in Paper 193.

The first sentence of Paper 194 is on page 2059.

"About one o'clock, as the one hundred and twenty believers were engaged in prayer, they all became aware of a strange presence in the room." P.2059 - p1.

Clearly the opening scene of Paper 194 on page 2059 continues the closing scene of Paper 193 on page 2058. The chronology in the time of day is continuous from morning to afternoon. These two statements have no intervening text.

Peter then proposed that they go to the Jerusalem Temple, which everyone did. P.2059 - p2.

The remaining paragraphs to the bottom of page 2059 are again interspersed comments.

The first paragraph at the top of page 2060 then begins the events at the Temple.

"It was about two o'clock when Peter stood up in that very place where his Master had last taught in this temple . . ." P.2060 - p2.

"They talked for more than an hour and a half and delivered messages in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, as well as a few words in even other tongues with which they had a speaking acquaintance."

"By half past four o'clock more than two thousand new believers followed the apostles down to the pool of Siloam, where Peter, Andrew, James, and John baptized them in the Master's name. And it was dark when they had finished with baptizing this multitude." P.2060 - p4 .

(Baptism at Pentecost was a Jewish custom.)

Without any question ten days are missing in the account. Why Sadler would resort to his strange explanation is very difficult to understand — except that he was at a total loss to justify the damaging omission.

The biblical account is in Acts 1 and 2. According to that account they returned to the upper room from the ascension where "all these devoted themselves to prayer." This parallels the last sentence of page 2058 of Paper 193. Acts 1:15 states "In those days Peter stood up among the brethren," to give a discourse to 120 assembled persons, after which they cast lots for the selection of Matthias, as in the *Urantia Paper* account. Acts 2 then opens with "When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place." The structure of the biblical account thus has parallels with the Revelation. However, the intervening Greek word, *sumplerousthai* conditions this picture. The word strongly suggests an intervening interval between the return to the upper room after the ascension (40 days), and the day of Pentecost (50 days). Much debate has centered around this Greek word translated "had come." One scholar referred to it as an obnoxious word. Sometimes it is translated as "had fully come," meaning that the 50 days of the Pentecostal period were now complete.

The Encyclopedia Britannica states the following:

The Ascension of Jesus is mentioned in the Apostles' Creed, a profession of faith used for baptism in the early church. The feast of the Ascension ranks with Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost in the universality of its observance among Christians. The feast has been celebrated 40 days after Easter in both Eastern and Western Christianity since the 4th century. Prior to that time, the Ascension was commemorated as a part of the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

A distinctive feature of the feast's liturgy in the Western churches is the extinguishing of the Paschal candle after the Gospel has been chanted, as a symbol of Christ's leaving the earth. Despite the idea of separation indicated in this act, which might be expected to set a note of sadness, the whole liturgy of Ascensiontide, through the 10 days to Pentecost, is marked by joy in the final triumph of the risen Lord. One of the central themes of the feast is the kingship of Christ, and the theological implication is that the Ascension was the final redemptive act conferring participation in the divine life on all who are members of Christ. In other words, Christ "was lifted up into heaven so that he might make us partakers of his Godhead."

Thus we can see that the ascension and Pentecost were closely related in the worship sentiments of the early Church. But the fact that "the Ascension was commemorated as a part of the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost" does not provide foundation for confusing the two events. This schedule was later abandoned by Christianity.

In attempt to clarify the schedule of the Jewish festivals, and the timing of Pentecost with respect to the Passover, I consulted several sources on Jewish calendars and religious festival celebrations. Was it possible, by some chance, the 50 days might shift around the month from year to year? If so, how much? Although such suggestion was in defiance of the Mosaic law, I felt I should investigate to remove all doubt.

The first important command given to Moses was as follows:

Lev 23:15-16

“And you shall count from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be, counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to the LORD.”

Barnes' Notes offers these remarks:

The original word, “omer”, means either a sheaf or a measure. The offering which was waved was most likely a small sheaf of barley, the grain which is first ripe. The first fruits of the wheat harvest were offered seven weeks later in the loaves of Pentecost.

“On the morrow after the sabbath” most probable denotes the 16th of Abib (Nisan), the day after the first day of holy convocation, and that this was called “the Sabbath of the Passover”, or, “the Sabbath of unleavened bread”.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown *Commentary* offers these remarks:

[Ye shall count . . . from the morrow after the sabbath] - i. e., after the first day of the Passover week, which was observed as a Sabbath.

[Number fifty days.] The 49th day after the presentation of the first-fruits, or the 50th including it, was the feast of Pentecost (see also <Exo. 23:16; Deut. 16:9>).

Although there is some difference in understanding of how to compute the 50 days, or where the count should start, the fact of 50 days is without dispute. This difference in computation shows among the ancients. Some computed from the day after Passover, the 16th of the month of Nisan, while others computed from the next Saturday sabbath. The “seventh sabbath” meant seven weeks, where weeks were identified as “sabbaths.”

The second important command given to Moses was:

Deut 16:9-10

“You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you first put the sickle to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the feast of weeks to . . .”

From the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown *Commentary*:

[Seven weeks shalt thou number] — the feast of weeks, or a WEEK OF WEEKS; the feast of Pentecost. As on the second day of the Passover, a sheaf of new barley, reaped on purpose, was brought into the sanctuary and presented as a thank offering to God, so on the second day of Pentecost a sheaf of new wheat was presented as first-fruits - a free-will spontaneous tribute of gratitude to God for his temporal bounties. This feast was instituted in memory of the giving of the law - that spiritual food by which man's soul is nourished.

Clearly, the count was fifty days.

The two festivals of the Passover and Pentecost were tied to one another by ancient custom. Each was originally a grain harvest celebration, with the “first fruits” offered to the gods. The first stalks of harvested grain would be set aside for offering to the gods, or the god of vegetation. These pagan customs were later adapted by the Hebrew people as an offering to the LORD, and incorporated into the Mosaic laws to verify their blessing by God. The first festival was based on the barley harvest, the first of the grain harvests. The second festival, “feast of weeks,” was based on the wheat harvest, which came seven weeks after the barley.

In an article titled *Passover And Pentecost — Timing Problems*, in an issue of the Urantia Foundation's *Journal of the International Urantia Association* in 1999, Seppo Kanerva developed this error in *The Urantia Papers*. Seppo stated:

“We learn that not a word is said about the Passover feast. The fifty days to Pentecost are not counted from Passover but rather from the day after the Sabbath on which you bring your sheaf to the Lord. Another pericope, in Deuteronomy (the fifth Mosaic Book), says that the feast of Spring Harvest, Pentecost, is to be dated seven weeks from the time you first put the sickle to the standing grain. [Deut. 16:9]. Not a word about Passover as the day wherefrom the count is to be performed. The exact day of the “day after the Sabbath on which you bring your sheaf”, or “the time you first put the sickle to the standing grain” is not determined anywhere in the Bible, yet it must have been the same date every year, since the Pentecost had a fixed date, it was one of the three annual temple pilgrimage days, and these festivals were considered a moed, which meant observance on the same date annually. Evidently the Spring Festival must at least in some years have fallen on a date in close proximity to Passover. The Spring Harvest Festival, the scholars believe, was originally timed so that it overlapped or nearly overlapped with Passover, and since it was intolerable to have two days obligated with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to fall on the busiest agricultural season of the year, the Spring Harvest Feast was deferred with fifty days to a later date, hence the name Pentecost.

"It then is another matter that in colloquial language Pentecost was said to be fifty days from Passover; but it was only colloquial parlance; the exact date only occasionally coincided with the Passover date (since Passover was a moving feast); it was, thus, just an approximation to say that Pentecost was fifty days later than Passover, Pesah."

These statements by Seppo are simply not correct. Pentecost always fell *"fifty days to the morrow after the seventh sabbath."*

Seppo assumed that *"it must have been the same date every year; since the Pentecost had a fixed date, it was one of the three annual temple pilgrimage days, and these festivals were considered a moed, which meant observance on the same date annually."*

By "same date annually" he meant by a solar calendar.

But the old Hebrew practices did not calculate according to a solar calendar; they calculated according to a lunar calendar. The first day of the first month of the Hebrew religious year, Nisan 1, was determined by the appearance of the first new moon near the vernal equinox, calculated so that the Passover (Paschal) celebration would not fall before the equinox. Nisan 1 occurred no earlier than fourteen days before the vernal equinox, and no later than fourteen days after the vernal equinox. Hence, Passover (full moon) drifted around the solar calendar by as much as 28 to 29 days.

The ancient Hebrew people, (later Jews), had to understand the cycles of the earth around the sun, and had to be able to calculate the vernal equinox. Otherwise they could not determine when the first new moon would appear, centered on the equinox, and would not be able to calculate the day of Passover (full moon).

Everyone in the many Jewish communities scattered throughout the Roman empire at the time of Jesus understood how this was the "same date annually," calculated according to the lunar cycles, based on new moons, (revolution of the moon around the earth), related to the vernal equinox based on solar cycles, (revolution of the earth around the sun). Hence, no one in those Jewish communities had any difficulty estimating the time of the Passover, and could make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in time for the Passover celebration.

According to the ancient custom, the religious ruling body in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, would station observers at convenient geographical locations within the environs of Jerusalem, to verify the first appearance of the New moon near the equinox. They then would send forth a proclamation to the scattered Jewish communities for the beginning of the new religious year, and the celebration of the Passover on Nisan 14, two weeks later. But this was a formality, to give official sanction to the date.

The time of travel to distant locations around the Roman empire would prohibit the appearance in Jerusalem of Hebrew males, according to the Mosaic dictum, sometime during the next thirty days, if they depended upon an "official" word to first tell them. While the travelers may not have known the exact date, within a few days, they could make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem in time to hear the official proclamation.

Hence, it was no problem for them to make the temple pilgrimages, not on the same solar date annually, but on the same lunar date annually, clocked to the solar equinox event.

The other part of this problem is the timing of the harvest. How did the Hebrew people know the grains would ripen in synchrony with the full moon?

I recall as a boy my grandfather and grandmother planning their spring farm crops of barley, oats, wheat, and corn, according to the "signs" — which meant the phases of the moon. All old people planted according to the cycles of the heavens, believing that the fecundity of the crops improved if one planted on those schedules. While the spring season was determined by the cycles of the sun, the old people followed the moon to determine the best time to place the seed in the ground. This practice prevailed around the world in ancient times.

If the Hebrew people planted their crops according to the "signs," they then could predict, within a few days, the time of the harvest. Thus they could synchronize the harvest with the religious festival, based on the cycles of the moon.

Some debate exists about "green" grain on the stalk being offered to God, or whether this was "ripe" grain. Also, for higher elevations, the weather might not be compatible with the "official" planting date. The plantings might vary, and the grain might not ripen as fast as in lower elevations. These practices should be understood from their ancient origins, where the community of believers was local, and geographical variations did not disturb the calculations.

From these factors we can see why Seppo's surmise is not correct. He simply did not understand the ancient practices.

I felt that I should firmly establish the exact count of fifty days to Pentecost. I went to various other sources. Those included:

The Jewish Encyclopedia, Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1905:

"Pentecost falls on the 6th of Siwan and never occurs on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday."

(This proscription is a later development.)

This shows that Pentecost always fall on the same date annually, in the Jewish lunar calendar.

Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, James Hastings, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1918:

"Although there has been much dispute as to the exact meaning of 'the morrow after the sabbath,' it is generally agreed to treat the 16th Nisan as the day when the wave-sheaf of early barley was offered and as the day when they began to 'count the omer'." (Counting the 'omer' was the count to Pentecost.)

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, The Howard-Severance Company, Chicago, 1925:

“As the name indicates, (pentecoste = 50) this second of the great Jewish national festivals was observed on the 50th day, or seven weeks, from the Pashal Feast, and therefore in the OT it was called ‘the feast of the weeks.’”

Encyclopedia Judaica, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1971:

“Shavout (Hebrew ‘weeks,’ Pentecost, ‘the 50th day’), the festival celebrated on the sixth of Sivan.”

The New Catholic Encyclopedia, San Francisco, 1971:

“Later, the Pharisees identified the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the feast day itself on the 15th of the first month (Nisan), and computing the 50-day period from the 16th, they celebrated Pentecost on the 6th day of the 3rd month.”

A statement from Remy Landau, an expert on Jewish calendrics:

“The count of the Omer is always fixed. In the prevailing practice, day 1 of the Omer is Nisan 16. Adding 49 days to that date gets you to Sivan 6, coinciding with Fri 21 May this year (1999).”

Thus we can see universal agreement. The date of the Paschal celebration was set by the beginning of the Hebrew new year according to the phases of the moon, and that Pentecost was always fixed to that date, at 50 days.

Hence, the descriptions in *The Urantia Papers* wherein the events of Pentecost occurred on the same day as the ascension of Jesus, forty days after his resurrection, cannot be correct.

We cannot accept that the missing ten days is an accidental omission. The sequence of events from the ascension at 7:45 in the morning to the end of the baptism at dark is explicitly described. The non-human authors of the Paper must have known they were missing those ten days.

But the error is more substantial than missing text. The continuity of the account makes it flow directly into Pentecost at forty days. An explicit statement is made which shows that the designers of the account knew they were using forty days, not fifty.

P.2060 - The apostles had been in hiding for forty days. This day happened to be the Jewish festival of Pentecost, and thousands of visitors from all parts of the world were in Jerusalem.

Sadler’s reaction to Adams shows that he was aware of the problem but had no adequate explanation. It seems to have come to his notice as though he was unaware that text had been cut. His remark about deletion of material does not help:

You should remember that the midwayers prepared a narrative that was many times larger than was finally given us as Part IV of the Urantia Book. It may be that in deletion some difficulties were encountered.

How did he know the midwayers had prepared a larger narrative? Was larger text given and then cut? Or did he know only the narrative that “was finally given us” in 1935? If the latter he must have been told that there had been a narrative “many times” larger.

But why give this information? Why would the midwayers have tantalized Sadler and the Forum members with such information?

We have an easy explanation. If a malevolent influence was attempting to justify “its” instructions to Sadler to make changes, “it” would provide a reason. Caligastia told Sadler the original 1935 account was many times larger to justify changes he was making to the text, under the guise of being the midwayer commission. These newer cuts were merely part of that editing process.

But the flow of the account from Papers 193 to 194 means that the Papers were being rewritten, not merely being edited with a deleted paragraph or two. The flow of events with the hours of the day takes place from page 2057 to 2060, nearly four pages. Sadler had to know about such major rework. And yet it seems he did not know about it.

The abrupt break between Paper 193 and 194 might have misled Sadler. As he said, he saw the prayer of Peter at the end of 193, and the opening prayer at the beginning of 194 as two different scenes. He simply did not notice the forty-day problem until years later, perhaps after the manuscript had been typeset and galleys were under proofreading. At least he was aware of it when the “Book was going to press,” sometime in the early 1950’s. The remark that “we all noted it one time” suggests he was aware of it some time before that.

Is it possible that the changes to the Pentecost account were made at a period far enough removed from his early detection that he forgot about the changes to that particular passage? Or were the changes to that passage part of a larger array of changes which became lost in Sadler’s memory?

Unless we obtain more concrete information we can only speculate.

The important aspect of this missing text is that Sadler believed the midwayers were responsible for the errors. He was told not only that the midwayers wrote the text, but that they were responsible for the changes made after 1935. When faced with this rather obvious and acute error, he assigned it to the midwayers, with weakness equivalent to human.

How sad.

On the following pages are simple tutorials on Calendars and Festivals.

Calendars

Three major calendars are in use around the world today. They are solar, lunar, and lunisolar.

A solar calendar is based on the motion of the earth around the sun. It is synchronized to the seasons of the year: the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and the summer and winter solstices. Our modern western calendar begins a new year just after the winter solstice. Our months originated in the cycles of the moon, but were later adapted to the solar cycle by adding a different number of days to different months in order that twelve months fill out one solar cycle of 365+ days.

A lunar calendar is based on the motion of the moon around the earth. It begins a new month each time the moon reaches a given position in the sky. The lunar cycle is about 29 and 1/2 days. Normally, calendars based on lunar months have either 29 or 30 days to accommodate the half day. Lunar calendars make no attempt to synchronize the months with the cycles of the sun.

A lunisolar calendar was used by the Hebrew people. It follows the cycles of the moon, but is synchronized to reset the lunar year to the solar year. Thus Nisan 1 is the first new moon centered about the vernal equinox. Since the Hebrew twelve months of 29 or 30 days add to only 354 days, the calendar gradually falls behind the solar cycle over a period of about three years. To resynchronize with a full year of 365+ days, an additional month of 30 days is occasionally inserted into the calendar. This 13th month is known as a “leap month.” Nineteen years bring the moon back to the (nearly) same position in the solar sky. Therefore, the extra month is inserted in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of the 19-year cycle. In this manner the Hebrew calendar could follow the lunar cycles, while not becoming disconnected from the solar cycles.

The Jewish religious calendar begins with the spring month of Nisan. The Jewish civil calendar begins with the fall month of Tishri.

For an introductory description of calendars refer to the article by L. E. Doggett in *Explanatory Supplement to the Astronomical Almanac*, P. Kenneth Seidelmann, Editor, University Science Books, Sausalito, CA 94965.

Jewish Religious Festivals

The Jewish religious festivals had origins in the dim mists of the past. All ancient people gave respect to the gods through observation of yearly cycles. These religious cycles still persist in the traditions of the modern Christian churches.

Incorporated into the yearly festivals was thankfulness for the favor of the gods in vegetable and grain produce. The people of ancient Israel planted grains in the winter season, in order that the grain ripen before the onset of the hot, dry summer. Seed time was clocked by the phases of the moon. Since the calendar of religious festivals was also clocked by the moon, the first grain harvest came in each year according to the position of the moon. Thus the barley harvest could be expected around the 14th of Nisan. If barley and wheat were both planted at the same time, the ripening of the two grains was separated by seven weeks.

Thus the religious calendar was based on these harvests. This is the reason for the commandments given to Moses.

FEASTS AND FESTIVALS

The following short dissertation on Hebrew religious festivals is from *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The Hebrew word for “pilgrimage” seems to be reserved mostly for the three great annual feasts of the Hebrew people: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles. These feasts are discussed in Leviticus 23. They were very important in the Jewish faith, and every male was expected to observe them.

The religious pilgrimage from the various towns and cities to the Temple or to the Levitical Cities scattered throughout the land became annual events. This yearly event may also have progressed from an annual “pilgrimage” early in Israel's history to a “processional” at the Temple or at the Levitical center in later times. In all the feasts and festivals the nation of Israel remembered its past and renewed its faith in the Lord who created and sustained His people.

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

References to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread include Exodus 12:1--13:16; 23:15; 34:18-20,25; Leviticus 23:4-14; Numbers 28:16-25; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Joshua 4:19-23; 5:10-12; and 2 Chronicles 30:2,3, 13,15.

The Passover was the first of the three great festivals of the Hebrew people. It referred to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were slaves. The Hebrews smeared the blood of the lamb on their doorposts as a signal to God that He should “pass over” their houses when He destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let His people go.

Passover was observed on the 14th day of the first month, Abib, (Nisan), with the service beginning in the evening, Lev. 23:6. It was on the evening of this day that Israel left Egypt. Passover commemorated this departure from Egypt in haste. Unleavened bread was used in the celebration because this showed that the people had no time to put leaven in their bread as they ate their final meal as slaves in Egypt.

Several regulations were given concerning the observance of Passover. Passover was to be observed “in the place which the Lord your God will choose.” This implied the sanctuary of the tabernacle or the Temple in Jerusalem.

Joshua 5:10-12 refers to the observing of Passover in the plains of Jericho near Gilgal. Second Chronicles 30:1,3, 13,15 describes a Passover during the reign of Hezekiah. Messengers were sent throughout the land to invite the people to come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. Many refused; some even scorned the one who carried the invitation. Because the people were not ready to observe the Passover, a delay of one month was recommended. That year the Passover was on the 14th day of the second month. Even after the delay many still were not ready to observe the Passover.

In New Testament times, Passover became a pilgrim festival. Large numbers gathered in Jerusalem to observe this annual celebration. Jesus was crucified in the city during one of these Passover celebrations. He and His disciples ate a Passover meal together on the eve of His death. Like the blood of the lamb which saved the Hebrew people from destruction in Egypt, His blood, as the ultimate Passover sacrifice, redeems us from the power of sin and death.

Feast of Unleavened Bread

This feast began on the 15th day of the month (Nisan) as a part of the larger celebration of Passover, Ex. 13:3-10; Lev. 23:6-8. Manual labor was strictly forbidden. Strangers and native-born people alike were punished if they failed to keep this holy day. A convocation began the feast.

Only unleavened bread was to be eaten during this feast. Bread without leaven commemorated the haste with which Israel left Egypt. As the blood was drained from the sacrificial animal, so the life or the power of leaven was removed from the bread offered to God during this annual celebration.

Feast of Weeks

Biblical references to the Feast of Weeks include Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-12; and 2 Chronicles 8:13. This feast was observed early in the third month on the 50th day after the offering of the barley sheaf at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It included a holy convocation with the usual restriction on manual labor.

Numbers 28:26-31 describes the number and nature of offerings and Deuteronomy 16:9-12 describes those who were to be invited to this feast. They include servants, sons and daughters, Levites, the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. Israelites were to be reminded of their bondage in Egypt on that day.

This feast was also known as the Feast of Harvest as well as Pentecost. The early Christian believers, who were gathered in Jerusalem for observance of this feast, experienced the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit in a miraculous way Acts 2:1-4.