

THAT NIGHT OF THE LORD

Aka, Night to be Much Observed



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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture
is from the *King James Version*.

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SCRIPTURE

—REFERENCE

PREFACE

The Old Testament records the holydays or festival of God that were observed by Jesus Christ and the apostles. They portray God's plan of salvation for mankind; nevertheless, there is one particular observance that even true Christians may find confusing and hard to understand.

The holyday in question is commonly called The Night to be Much Observed (but properly named *That Night of the Lord* in scripture as is discussed later). This night occurs on the first of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is the first of two holy convocations. Not only is it a holyday but the night itself is an observance and memorial commanded by God. While it has deep spiritual meaning for all true Christians, it is one of the least understood.

God says That Night of the Lord is a night to be **much observed** (Exo. 12:42). Obviously then, God expects it to have meaning and purpose for us today but why does God command observance of that night? What was its meaning to the generations of ancient Israel and what is the significance of that night for Christians today? And just as important, *how* should it to be observed?

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CHAPTER 1

That Night of the Lord

(aka Night to be Much Observed)

That Night of the Lord—A Foreshadowing

The particular night that God commands to be much observed is the first night of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In God's calendar, it is Nisan (Abib) 15, and immediately follows the Passover on Nisan 14. While it was on this night that the ancient Israelites began their exodus from Egypt, this night was originally foreshadowed in Genesis 15 when God ratified a covenant with Abraham.

That Night of the Lord had its beginning even before the nation of Israel came into existence because that night was foretold hundreds of years prior to the Exodus from Egypt. In the book of Exodus, Moses recorded:

EXODUS 12:40-42 Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 42 It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

After 400 years in captivity, Israel *was* delivered (Gen. 15:13) just as God had promised. In fact, both the Passover and That Night of the Lord were foreshadowed in a covenant that God made with Abraham. God specially chose to establish His covenant with Abraham because he obeyed God's voice and kept His commandments and His laws (Gen. 26:5). The story begins in Genesis 15:

GENESIS 15:1-4 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I

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am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” 2 But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!” 4 And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”

Then, God took Abraham outside on **the night of Nisan 14** that would become known as **Passover** and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. ... “So shall your descendants be.” ” (Gen. 15:5). In a physical sense, this promise would be fulfilled through the nation of the children of Israel; spiritually, it is yet to be fulfilled as God brings “many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10) through the promised Seed, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). God told Abraham:

GENESIS 22:17-18 “[In] blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 **“In your seed [Jesus Christ] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,** because you have obeyed My voice.”

God promised Abraham that an heir—physical offspring—would come from his own loins. However, the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21:3) was only the beginning of the fulfillment of this promise. The birth of Jesus Christ was the ultimate fulfillment (Gal. 3:16).

In addition to children (physical and spiritual), God also promised to give Abraham and his descendants the land in which he was living:

GENESIS 15:7 Then He said to him, “I *am* the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, **to give you this land to inherit it.**”

To all of this Abraham asked, “Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it [*all these promises?*]?” (Gen. 15:8). In response, God told Abraham to prepare a special sacrifice that would confirm the covenant:

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GENESIS 15:9-11 So He [God] said to him [Abram], “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Known historically as a *covenant between the parts*, the parties to such a ritual would *both* pass between the parts of severed animals. In so doing, they were stating that if one or both of them broke the covenant agreement they should likewise be put to death:

JEREMIAH 34:18-20 ‘And I will give **the men who have transgressed My covenant**, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, **when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it**— 19 ‘the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land **who passed between the parts of the calf**— 20 ‘I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. **Their dead bodies** shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.

This is a *self-maledictory oath*; that is, one that requires a *curse* (of death) if the agreement is violated. In this case, however, only God passed between the animal carcasses demonstrating that **He alone** would take the penalty upon Himself—through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—if mankind failed to keep the covenant. That is why, as we will see, Abraham himself did not pass between the pieces. Only God passed between the parts of the animals and thereby the life of Jesus Christ was pledged as the guarantor for the fulfillment of that covenant.

So Abraham prepared the animals as instructed during the daylight portion of Nisan 14 on what would come to be called Passover. The next verse in Genesis 15 shows the connection between this covenant and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on Passover:

GENESIS 15:12 Now when **the sun was going down**, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, **horror and great darkness fell upon him**.

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All of this occurred as the sun was going down (past its zenith, i.e., past noon) at the same time as the Passover on Nisan 14 in 30 AD when Jesus Christ was crucified. The “horror *and* great darkness” was a mirror of the darkness that came upon the land during the time Jesus Christ was on the cross (sixth to ninth hours of the day—Mat. 27:45, et al). Afterwards, God said to Abraham:

GENESIS 15:13-16 Then He [*God*] said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 “And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 “Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”

God told Abraham that his physical descendants would someday become captives in a foreign land but that he would deliver them as part of His covenant promises. Now notice verse 17:

GENESIS 15:17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and **a burning torch that passed between those pieces.**

God, seen as a burning lamp, passed between the parts of the animal sacrifices. In so doing, God ratified and sealed His covenant promises to Abraham. All of this occurred when the sun went down at the beginning of Nisan 15, the first of the seven days of Feast of Unleavened Bread. The promise of deliverance of Abraham’s descendants included in the covenant was made on the same night would later become That Night of the Lord (aka The Night to be Much Observed).

Of course, God always kept His word and never violated the covenant He made with Abraham—the covenant would later be broken by mankind. As a result, Jesus Christ would have to die in order to fulfill the self-maledictory oath God made when He established the covenant.

Now look again at Exodus 12:40-41:

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EXODUS 12:40-41 Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—**on that very same day [the day God made the covenant with Abraham]—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.**

EXODUS 12:42 It *is* a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This *is* that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

On the same night that God ratified His covenant with Abraham 430 years earlier, the children of Israel departed from Rameses on Nisan 15 just as God had promised. Continuing in verse 42:

EXODUS 12:42 **It is a night of solemn observance** to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. **This is that night of the LORD**, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

The night that He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt was to be memorialized by all current and future generations. The significance of their liberation, in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and brought about by His hand alone, makes That Night of the Lord one to be MUCH observed.

Physical Israel—Delivered Out of Bondage in Egypt

As captives in Egypt, the children of Israel faced bitter, hard bondage. Their taskmasters ruled with rigor and harshness. In desperation, they turned to God, crying out for deliverance:

EXODUS 2:23-24 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24 So God heard their groaning, and **God remembered His covenant with Abraham**, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

So, God told Moses:

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EXODUS 6:5-6 “And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and **I have remembered My covenant [with Abraham].** 6 “Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I *am* the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, **I will rescue you from their bondage,** and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

God called upon Moses to lead the children of Israel out from the land of Egypt. From the burning bush, God told Moses:

EXODUS 3:7-8 And the LORD said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. 8 “So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

As promised, God would deliver the ancient Israelites from their affliction and bondage in Egypt. God then instructed Moses to prepare the children of Israel for their journey out of Egypt to the land promised to Abraham. After the Passover on Nisan 14 when the tenth plague against the Egyptians killed all the firstborn (Exo. 12:13), the exodus from Egypt began on the night of Nisan 15:

EXODUS 12:41-42 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that **all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 42 It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD,** a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

That Night of the Lord is also the beginning of the first of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Notice:

EXODUS 12:16-17 ‘On the first day [*of the Feast of Unleavened Bread*] there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but *that* which

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everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. 17 ‘So you shall **observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt.** Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

Meaning & Name of the Night of Nisan 15

While some refer to it as the Night to be Much Observed, Exodus 12:42 states, “**This is** that night of the LORD” because God is specifically mentioning THAT night of Nisan 15 when the LORD liberated the Israelites; therefore, the NAME of that night is **That Night of the Lord**. Referring to is a night to be much observed emphasizes “That Night of the LORD **[is] a solemn observance.**”

The Hebrew word for “solemn observance” in Exodus 12:42 is *shimmur*, meaning *watches*. In English, watching is to be alert for something significant. *Shimmur* is a form of the word *shamar* meaning to hedge about (as with thorns); which is, by extension, to guard, to protect, or attend to something. They express more than simple observation; both mean to **preserve and protect a thing or memory**, to be circumspect and **take serious heed** of it. This is the reason it is translated “**solemn** observance.”

But was this a watching for a something yet to happen or past occurrence? God told the Israelites, “**Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this *place*.” (Exo. 13:3). The night of Nisan 15, That Night of the Lord, was to be a **solemn observance** of guarding, protecting, and attending to the *memory* of what happened in Egypt. They were never to forget the power and might of God who destroyed the Egyptians and their liberation from the hard bondage of slavery.

Physical Israel—Observance of That Night of the Lord

That Night of the Lord is the beginning of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is the memorial of God’s

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fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham when He rescued the ancient Israelites. For this reason, He commanded them to guard, protect, and attend to the **memory** of it. The specific night of Nisan 15 is the **only** night of ALL the holydays (Passover is not a holyday) that God specifically sets apart as a special memorial (solemn observance). As such, it was a night to **remember** because they had fled from a place of bondage and death and began a journey toward a land of abundance and life.

In addition to remembering that night, proper observance also required them to eat unleavened bread (Exo. 12:15). The bread was unleavened since there was no time to allow the bread to rise in their haste to leave Egypt. It was properly called the “**bread of affliction**” (Deut. 16:3) because up to that point they had been slaves in Egypt all their lives. They lived in bondage, serving the will of others in hard toil and misery until they died. The unleavened bread of affliction was a physical REMINDER of their enslavement in Egypt and SYMBOL of their liberation.

Spiritual Israel—Delivered Out of Bondage to Satan

While the children of Israel were the recipients of the physical promises God made to Abraham, the covenant included spiritual promises that are being fulfilled through the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. True Christians are even called Abraham’s seed because they are “heirs [of the covenant] according to the [spiritual] promise” (Gal. 3:29).

God established His covenant with Abraham because He was faithful and obedient. True Christians are also heirs of that covenant if, like Abraham, they are faithful and obedient to the end. God promised Abraham that “In your seed [Jesus Christ] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16). The covenant and its spiritual promises apply to the spiritual firstfruit seed of Abraham and, ultimately, to all of mankind. For true Christians, That Night of the Lord pictures an exodus from bondage to this world and sin, both typified by Egypt.

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Just as the ancient Israelites left Egypt on a journey to the promised land, true Christians have spiritually come out of this world to embark on a journey to the true Promised Land—the Kingdom of God. God commanded Abraham to “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, **to a land that I will show you.**” (Gen. 12:1), but His promise to Abraham was much more than a physical inheritance and he knew it:

HEBREWS 11:9 By faith he [*Abraham*] dwelt in the land of promise [*Canaan*] **as in a foreign country**, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

But Abraham knew there was a greater spiritual inheritance because “he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* **God**” (Heb. 11:10).

A true Christian’s life BEGINS when God calls us to come out of the bondage and sins of this “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). Our own exodus from Egypt starts when God calls us to repentance of sins, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. This journey leads to the TRUE Promised Land—the coming Kingdom of God that Abraham knew was his true inheritance. It is not, however, one measured in steps but by continually striving to walk in the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25; 2:12).

That Night of the Lord is most assuredly a solemn occasion to be watching and remembering our salvation, reflect upon our eternal inheritance, and give thanks to God for His merciful, and undeserved, grace.

The shed blood of the sacrifice of Jesus sealed the New Covenant and, when someone accepts Him as their personal Savior, they become heirs of the covenant promises. As heirs, God promises to free them from the “yoke of bondage” of sin (Gal. 5:1) and make them inheritors of the Promised Land of the Kingdom of God.

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Spiritual Israel—Observance of That Night of the Lord

That Night of the Lord is a most appropriate way to begin keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Observance begins after **sundown** on the night of Nisan 15.

EXODUS 12:42 It is **a night** of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is **that night of the LORD**, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

It is the night that the children of Israel, both physical and spiritual, are commanded to observe for ALL generations. God brought us out of bondage to Satan and rescued us from the death penalty of sin through the shed blood of His Son's sacrifice. From there, we can look toward the future at the end of our journey when we inherit the eternal kingdom of heaven. As a memorial, That Night of the Lord is a time to REJOICE because we have been liberated from sin and escaped death by God's mercy and grace. Once we were slaves but now we are free. We are to guard, to protect, and attend to the memory of all that God has, and is doing, for us.

The new covenant brings subtle but important differences in the physical and spiritual keeping of That Night of the Lord. For true Christians, it is full of meaning and purpose on a very personal level. It is full of meaning following the observance and keeping of Passover because it is a vision of our liberation from death and our inheritance in the new covenant, all made possible by the willing sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ. Below is a comparison of the physical, old covenant and the spiritual, new covenant events that are to be remembered and memorialized on this night.

#	PHYSICAL ISRAEL	SPIRITUAL ISRAEL
1	They were once <u>slaves</u> of Egypt with no hope of <u>escape</u> .	We were once <u>slaves</u> of Satan with no hope of <u>escape</u> .
2	Their end was <u>death</u> .	Our end was <u>death</u> .
3	God <u>alone</u> made possible their <u>salvation</u> .	God <u>alone</u> made possible our <u>salvation</u> .
4	They were <u>not worthy</u> of God's salvation.	We were <u>not worthy</u> of God's salvation.

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#	PHYSICAL ISRAEL	SPIRITUAL ISRAEL
5	They fled Egypt in <u>haste</u> .	We had an <u>urgency</u> to repent of sin.
6	The covenant existed because Abraham <u>obeyed</u> God.	The covenant exists because Jesus Christ <u>obeyed</u> God (Phil. 2:8) and shed His own <u>blood</u> (Heb. 13:20).
7	They had <u>no part</u> in establishing the covenant.	We had <u>no part</u> in establishing the covenant.
8	It was a <u>marriage</u> covenant.	It is a <u>marriage</u> covenant.
9	The covenant was (physically) <u>everlasting</u> .	The covenant is (spiritually) <u>eternal</u> .
10	They were <u>inheritors</u> of the covenant promises.	We are <u>inheritors</u> of the covenant promises.
11	They were <u>heirs</u> of the promised land (the land of Canaan).	We are <u>heirs</u> of the promised land (the Kingdom of God).
12	God destroyed all their <u>enemies</u> .	God will destroy all our <u>enemies</u> .
13	God <u>fulfilled</u> His covenant promises.	God is <u>fulfilling</u> the covenant promises.
14	God was their <u>King</u> .	God is our <u>Father</u> .

Like with the ancient Israelites, proper observance of that night also requires eating unleavened bread. Eating the unleavened “bread of affliction” reminds us that we were slaves to Satan and that sin brings death upon us. **The unleavened bread of affliction is a physical REMINDER of our enslavement to sin and SYMBOL of our liberation from death.**

Since this night represents the beginning our exodus from sin to eternal life through God’s power and merciful grace, reflecting upon our salvation is the singular purpose of this memorial. The purpose of That Night of the Lord is to remember our calling, counting the cost, our baptism, our spiritual begetting, and our journey toward the kingdom of God.

Those that are able to gather together can share stories of their calling and conversion, overcoming sins, trials, blessings, and opportunities to serve God. Whether we are alone or not, it is a time for prayer, meditating on the salvation of God, or singing of

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hymns. While having a special meal can help set it apart, it is not required to observe the true meaning of That Night of the Lord nor should it be the focus. (see Appendix B for more information).

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APPENDIX A

Table of Events on Nisan 14 and 15

The following chart is a timeline from Passover night through the night of the first holyday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread comparing the events on these days from Abraham through to the new covenant.

ERA	NISAN 14		NISAN 15
	PASSOVER		FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD
	NIGHT	DAY	NIGHT
Abraham	God promises Abram a son and his descendants would be like the stars in heaven if he could count them (Gen. 15:1-6).	Abram cuts the animals in half for a sacrifice and experiences the "horror of great darkness" (Gen. 15:7-16).	God passes between the cut animals of the sacrifice sealing the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:17-18).
Moses	The ancient Israelites eat the Passover lamb and the Egyptian firstborn die (Exo. 12:29-30).	The ancient Israelites "spoil" the Egyptians (Exo. 12:31-36).	The ancient Israelites begin their exodus from Egypt (Exo. 12:37-41).
Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ eats the Passover bread and wine with His disciples.	Jesus Christ is crucified on the cross.	The first night that Jesus Christ is in the grave.
New Covenant	Passover ceremony (footwashing, bread, wine).	Remember Jesus Christ's crucifixion (1 Cor. 5:7-8).	Observance of <i>That Night of the Lord</i> (a night to be much observed).

APPENDIX B

Notes on the Old Testament Passover Meal

Some have eaten a meal for That Night of the Lord fashioned along the lines of the Old Testament Passover meal (lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread—Exo. 12:3-8); however, this is not an appropriate fare for the occasion for two reasons. First, the Old Testament Passover meal (sometimes incorrectly called a *seder* supper) is replaced in the new covenant Passover with unleavened bread and wine (Mat. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22) as Jesus Christ commanded. We are to partake of the new symbols of the covenant by eating a small piece of bread and drinking a small sip of wine rather than eating a full meal. This is explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 where he reprimanded those who feasted on a meal, forgetting the solemn remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of our Savior. The lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread were specific to the old, physical Passover covenant. For true Christians, the spiritual new covenant Passover completely replaces the physical old covenant Passover. As a result, inclusion of the Old Testament Passover meal only distracts from the meaning of the NEW covenant.

Second, incorporating the Old Testament Passover meal into That Night of the Lord is unfitting because the Jews today erroneously keep the Passover on the evening of Nisan 15 instead of Nisan 14. Any ties to their untimely observance of Passover, especially with an Old Testament Passover meal of lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, is confusing at best and could lead some to misconstrue the meaning and purpose of That Night of the Lord.

If a special meal is appropriate for the evening, it should avoid the appearance being an Old Testament Passover meal. It should also be for the purpose of enhancing the observance of the occasion without requiring excessive labor (it is a holyday) or being uncomfortable for anyone.

