



ACM BIBLE STUDIES

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Twenty

INTRODUCTION

NOTE: In this chapter we give special attention to certain misunderstood and misused passages. In addressing these passages we expose a handful of common doctrinal errors. These include teachings about feasts, sabbaths, the calendar, the Old Covenant, the soul, and how to identify enemies, friends, and leaders.

PAUL had just spent two years in Ephesus sharing the gospel of Christ's Kingship. Then he went through Macedonia and then south to Greece (probably to the city of Corinth) where he stayed three months teaching and exhorting the people. Then Paul turns back and returns the way he came.

This was Paul's third excursion into Asia Minor to carry the good news of Christ's salvation and Kingship to the Children of Israel scattered in the nations.

Now, Paul was in danger of being arrested or killed because he had incurred the wrath of some merchants who were making and selling silver idols ... mostly to the worshipers of Diana. The Corinthian "Diana" was one of the many versions of the Persian "Ishtar/Astarte," the Greek "Artemis," and other female goddesses, including the statue of "Minerva" (renamed "Freedom") atop today's U.S. Capitol dome.

ACTS 20:1-6 COUNTERFEIT FEASTS OF THE JEWS

And after the uproar ceased and Paul had sent for the disciples and greeted them and encouraged them, he left to go to Macedonia.

And having gone through those parts, and having encouraged them with many words, he came into Greece,

And by the third month the Jews were plotting against him, and he decided to go on into Syria, returning through Macedonia.

And accompanying him were Sopater the son of Pyrrhus the Berean, and the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians Tychicus and Trophimus.

These went on and were waiting for us at Troas.

And we sailed from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and

came to them at Troas in five days, where we remained seven days.

PAUL was on the return leg of his third mission to Israelites scattered in the nations. He left Greece, intending to return back through Macedonia, retracing the way he had come. He was planning a trip also to Jerusalem and seems unsure whether to go there before or after returning to Antioch. Later, as it turns out, he goes first to Jerusalem ... and he never gets back to Antioch.

Hounded and persecuted by the Jews at every juncture, Paul and company traveled back northward through Macedonia, and then eastward from Philippi, across the Aegean Sea over to Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). At Troas they met up with more friends who had gone ahead from Macedonia.

Verse six says that they left Philippi “*after the days of Unleavened Bread.*” We need to notice this wording in particular, because some people have assumed that it somehow infers that Paul was keeping Old Covenant feasts. In fact, some people go so far as to say that Old Covenant feast-keeping is a New Covenant doctrine that all Christians are commanded to keep. Some of this confusion is perpetuated by misreading and misunderstanding this verse.

I had to deal with this early on. A faction that spun off the Judeo-Christian church in which I grew up came to be known as The Worldwide Church of God (i.e., Herbert Armstrong). Armstrong taught that it was necessary to keep the Old Covenant feasts. Acts 20:6 is one of the verses he used to support his theory. He argued that the sacrifices were done away in Christ, but the feasts were not. They used this verse as evidence that Paul kept the Old Covenant feasts.

Reading this passage we see that Paul sailed away from Philippi “*after the days of Unleavened Bread.*” Feast keepers assume that the reason

Paul left Philippi after the feast was because he had been keeping the feast there and couldn't leave till it was past. But a careful and unbiased examination of this verse gives no indication that Paul kept the feast. He merely mentions it as a reference to the date. This holiday (“holy day”) was kept by Jews in the various lands as far as Judaism had spread. Where ever it was kept it bore the same title as the older (and different) holiday described in the books of Moses.

When Yahweh delivered Israel out of Egypt, over 2000 years earlier, He told them to keep the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” (Ex. 12). However, that feast, as well as the Old Covenant itself, had been abandoned by Israel long before the time of Paul. Israel abandoned her God during the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 8) and replaced Him with a system of kings. The Old Covenant ended when Israel rejected Yahweh as her Sovereign. The former system of national holidays built upon the Old Covenant contract (also considered Israel's marriage contract to Yahweh) ended then as well.

Israel was unfaithful to her Husband, Yahweh. She broke her marriage vows in ways too numerous to mention, causing Yahweh to divorce her and send her into captivity many centuries before Christ (Jer. 3:8). That divorce declared the death of the marriage contract (the Old Covenant).

In captivity in Babylon, apostate Israelites formed a religion that amalgamated with the Assyrians and Babylonians. They formed a religion that was a cross-breed mixture of Zoroastrianism and Old Covenant Israelism. It became known as Pharisaism, and later as Judaism. They used some of the old terms from the books of Moses, and adapted them to the theology of Zoroaster. The result was a perverted and counterfeit religion called

Judaism. It was not the Old Covenant ... but the Jews claimed it was, and others assumed that it was. Churches today still make that wrong assumption.

During and after the Babylonian captivity, Jews developed religious traditions and holidays that incorporated some words and titles from the the books of Moses. These traditions and institutions were given names similar to the old institutions of Israel. One of these Babylonian/Jewish feasts was named “Unleavened Bread” (named after the feast God gave Israel through Moses at their exodus from Egypt).

The feast to which Paul refers in verse 6 was the Babylonian/Jewish “Unleavened Bread” – not the old Mosaic Feast of Unleavened Bread. Yahweh had nothing to do with the Jews and their counterfeit Babylonian feasts.

21. I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Amos 5:21

A very long time before Paul came on the scene, Israel threw away her covenant and her national holidays. Eventually she lost her status as a free and independent nation, and she could no longer have her own national holidays. Thus she adopted customs and holidays of the nations in which she resided.

Keep this straight in your mind: the Mosaic system and the Judaic system were two distinctly different systems with two different origins and theologies in spite of using similar words. Jeremiah confirmed the separation in Jeremiah 3 where we read that Yahweh divorced Israel for infidelity and abandonment.

Hundreds of years later, at the time of Paul, the reference to this counterfeit Jewish holiday had no connection to the old Mosaic holiday. The feasts of the Jews were not the feasts given to Moses. Rather, the writer of the book of Acts uses the holiday as a time reference to an annual date. The Jewish holiday was a seasonal reference, much like Christmas, Halloween, or Easter. We

don't keep these pagan holidays. We don't honor or celebrate them. However we do acknowledge them by name as established dates associated with our current calendar. Easter denotes Spring; Halloween denotes fall; Christmas denotes Winter Solstice. Even though we don't celebrate Christmas, it's not uncommon for us to refer to that time of year as "the Christmas season." We may refer to something occurring "right after Christmas," or "just before Halloween," or "about the time of Easter," etc. We don't use these words with the feeling of reverence, but nonetheless they are in our vocabulary. They are common points of reference in America's calendar year.

In this same way, the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread was a recognized date on their calendar ... signifying a season of the year. Paul certainly doesn't imply that it carried any importance to Christians, or that Christians were bound to celebrate it.

QUESTION: If the feast of unleavened bread is not important, then why did God commanded us to keep this feast FOREVER in the following verses?

14. *And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance FOR EVER. (emphasis added)*

17. *And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an ordinance FOR EVER. (emphasis added)*

Exodus 12:14, 17

ACTS 20:7 "FIRST OF THE SABBATHS" NOT "FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK"

But in the first of the sabbaths, when we had gathered together to break bread, Paul was speaking with them, intending to depart the next day. And he continued the message until midnight.

IN MOST English versions of the Bible, including the KJV, verse seven begins, "*And upon the first day of the week ...*" That is a mistranslation, as can be proven by any good interlinear. It really says "*But in the first of the sabbaths.*" However, after making this correction you are faced with another problem. The phrase "*first of the sabbaths*" is not familiar to English readers. Its meaning needs to be clarified.

We must not change it or guess at it ... as the churches have done. Rather, we must find out what was meant by the original wording.

So, before we go on, we need an explanation of the phrase "*first of the sabbaths.*" What did it mean for those to whom Paul was speaking? Church-hired English translators have changed it by removing the word "sabbaths" ... probably because it made reference to God's law (in this case the fourth commandment) which the churches claim was abolished. Replacing it with the word "week" helped them avoid difficult questions from their followers.

This takes me back to the

teaching I received as a child. I was raised in a church that taught that Saturday was the original 7th-day sabbath of the fourth commandment. In that church we took great pride in calling ourselves "sabbath keepers" ... because we believed Saturday was the true sabbath given to Moses by God. On the other hand, most other churches worshipped on Sunday because they had accepted a different error ... that God's law was abolished by Jesus. They quit using the term "sabbath" and opted for the church term: "the Lord's Day." The King James translators then substituted the phrase, "*the first day of the week,*" in place of "*the first of sabbaths,*" and they were off and running. Thus, one church argues that Sunday is the day, and another argues that Saturday is the day ... and both are wrong.

Neither Saturday nor Sunday (nor any other day on the Roman calendar week) equates to the day designated by the Mosaic calendar. Both Saturday (Saturn's Day) and Sunday (Day of The Sun) are days of the Roman week. The Roman week, and its days, did not exist in

Moses' day. Scripturally, in terms of defining the original sabbath, Saturdarians haven't a foot to stand on, and neither do the antinomian Sunday keepers.

The fourth commandment was NOT abolished as most churches claim. But the fourth commandment does not relate to the Roman week.

Moses' calendar did not have "weeks." It had "sabbaths" (i.e. cycles of sevens) that fit into a fixed annual calendar (dates fell on the same days every year). In contrast, the Roman calendar had fixed months and weeks with dates falling on different days each year.

The Jewish calendar, on the other hand, was a different animal altogether. It followed the cycles of the moon ... like the Babylonian calendar.

Thus, those who claim that either "Saturday" (a Roman week day) or "Sunday" (also a Roman week day) is the original sabbath day of Moses' calendar," are off point. They understand neither the question nor the answer. Neither "Saturday" nor "Sunday" were known by Moses. These days did not exist on Moses'

calendar ... which was quite different from Rome's calendar.

Because of the particular arrangement of sabbaths in Moses' calendar, his 7th-day sabbath would fall on a different Roman week day each year. In the course of seven years Moses' sabbath day would have fallen upon each of the seven days of the Roman week.

They were different calendar systems.

In Exodus, chapter 12, we have a description of the exact beginning of Moses' calendar year. This is at the time of the Exodus and God is talking to Moses and Aaron:

1. *And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,*

2. *This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

Exodus 12:1,2

That was the month "Abib." It occurred in the Spring of the year. In fact, the word "Abib" means "green ears" ... denoting young wheat plants. Lo and behold, the Mosaic calendar year began at the time that vegetation was green and growing. Israel's year began in Spring, not the middle of Winter like the Roman year.

When you think about it, this makes sense. In an agrarian culture life begins anew every Spring.

On the other hand, the Winter Solstice is the time of year when everything is dead. The Pagans institutionalized Winter Solstice as the annual death and rebirth of their Sun god, Mithras. This, after much religious manipulation, was adopted by the churches under the label of "Christmas" (Christ's Mass). In accord with its prototype, it was cleverly called the birth of a "son god" – an obvious play on the word "sun."

So, the first month of the pagan year is January. But the first month of Moses' year was Abib, corresponding approximately to Spring, or the Vernal Equinox.

I mention this only to further acquaint you with the idea that Moses' calendar was very different from the Roman calendar, as well as the Jewish calendar – both of which are in use today. It is different in several ways. We can't expound upon all those differences in this study, but we will touch upon a few.

Another significant difference in Moses' calendar was the way the Sabbath cycles began. On Moses' calendar the sabbath cycle began with a sabbath, followed by six work days, and then another sabbath day ... and so on. The Jewish/Babylonian adaptation of the Roman calendar week started with a work day and ended with a sabbath day.

Some have argued that this is not the pattern laid out by God in the seven days of creation in Genesis. They claim He first worked six days and then rested the seventh. However, that logic raises the question of what God did before the six days of creation? Might He have rested before? Further, the "days" of creation were not literal 24-hour periods, but rather eras arranged in a pattern that

follows the sabbath cycle of sevens.

Thus, we see that the question is somewhat like asking which came first, the chicken or the egg.

However, to further substantiate our point, look at the pattern shown by holy scripture. God always began his calendar institutions with a day of rest and celebration.

- Adam's commission as overseer of Eden began with a sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3).
- The first day of the Israel liberation to freedom from Egypt was a sabbath (Ex. 12:16).
- The first day of Israel's year was a sabbath.
- The first days of the three major feasts of Israel were sabbaths.
- The first day of the age of Jesus' Reign was declared a sabbath. He rose at dawn on the Roman Sunday. (Mtt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-7; Lk. 24:1-5).

In so far as the 7-day sabbath cycle goes, we have a simple principle: namely, a pattern of one rest-day out of seven. That principle, and the spirit of the law, can be kept by anyone who can count to seven ... with or without a calendar. However, Moses' calendar was more extensive than that. Therefore, to go back to that calendar will require a complete makeover of our current calendar.

There are more examples I could cite, but these should suffice to make the point. The obvious pattern of God's time cycles shows that they begin with a sabbath to commemorate deliverance from bondage. The sabbath is an institution of freedom, celebrating the grace of our creator who gives freedom to all who seek Him.

In Paul's day, the phrase "*upon the first of the sabbaths*" simply meant "*the sabbath's first day*" (i.e., the first day of a 7-day sabbath cycle). The sabbath cycle began with a rest day: a sabbath. The word "week" is NOT in the Greek text. The Mosaic calendar had no "week." It had "sabbaths" (i.e., sabbath cycles). The sabbath cycle was the yard stick by which the Mosaic calendar was measured.

The Mosaic calendar was based on a fixed 50-year Jubilee cycle comprised of a series of cycles of seven days, fifty days, seven years, and fifty years. There were:

- 1) Sabbaths of days (seven days),
- 2) Seven sabbaths of days [Pentecost, beginning with a sabbath day and ending with a sabbath – 50 days],
- 3) Sabbaths of years (seven years),
- 4) Seven sabbaths of years [Jubilee, beginning with a sabbath year and ending with a sabbath – 50 years].

Israel abandoned their calendar along with their heritage when they chose to pattern their society after the nations around them (1 Sam 8) ... first under their own kings, and then under foreign kings and the calendar systems of their captors. Paul lived during Roman domination with its calendar week cycle. To keep a 7th-day Sabbath (according to the fourth commandment) Paul and the other disciples kept the day known to the Romans

as “Sunday.” That was the day on the Roman calendar in which Jesus rose from the tomb. It functioned as a weekly day of rest under Rome’s calendar system.

Later, the churches managed to change the way Christendom perceived Sunday by renaming it “The Lord’s Day” rather than “the Sabbath.” In this they were avoiding any appearance of law.

To add to the confusion, Catholic doctrine teaches that they changed the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday ... thus supporting the Jewish claim that Saturday was the Mosaic sabbath.

QUESTION: As a Christian I am very concerned about keeping God’s Law. If I didn’t keep the true Sabbath, won’t I be breaking God’s Law?

ACTS 20:8-14 EUTYCHUS “FALLS” FOR PAUL’S MESSAGE

And there were many lamps in the upper chamber, where we were gathered together.

And sitting at a opening was a young man named Eutychus who sunk into a deep sleep as Paul continued to speak. Having fallen to sleep he fell down from the third story, and was picked up dead.

But Paul went down, and fell upon him, and holding him

said, Do not be troubled, for his breath is in him.

And having gone up again, and having broken bread, and eaten, and visited a long while, even till daybreak, thus he departed.

And they brought the boy alive, and were comforted beyond measure.

And we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos as he had instructed us, there intending to pick up Paul who determined to go on foot.

And when he joined us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

PAUL, as Christ’s ambassador, had much to communicate about Christ’s Reign. As his discourse became lengthy, at midnight his message was interrupted by what could have been a serious accident.

We find this account starting in verse nine. As Paul was talking, a young man named Eutychus drifted off to sleep and fell from an opening on the third story. He fell and hit the floor hard. The people thought he was dead.

Yet, thankfully, Eutychus wasn’t dead. He looked dead but Paul reassured the people that he wasn’t. It says Paul came to him and held him to see if he was still breathing. Paul felt the breathing action and announced that Eutychus’ “breath” was still in him. The Greek word “*psuche*” denotes the basic motions and desires of the physical body. Breathing is perhaps the most basic physical need and function of man. When Paul said that his breath (*psuche*) was still in him, it was the same as saying “he is still alive.”

The people were greatly relieved that Eutychus survived his fall. Of course, Paul, having been interrupted, still had more to say. So after a brief pause for a snack they went back to the upper room and continued until dawn!

After the boy was shown to be okay, Paul’s companions went down to the ship and set sail. Paul walked ahead of them on foot. They met again at Assos and sailed on to Mitylene, further down the coast of Asia Minor. The ship was going from harbor to harbor with Paul going inland to talk to the people. They continued on around the coast of Asia Minor and eventually across the Mediterranean to Jerusalem.

There weren’t many boring days in Paul’s life once he took on this mission for Christ. There were civil disturbances, imprisonments, jail breaks, accidents, attacks from the Jews, etc. There was violence, murder and intrigue on one hand, and on the other hand exhilaration of watching the blessings of Christ’s Reign. It was one thing after another. For all these things, Paul’s message must have been extraordinary to hear at the time.

The Reign of Christ changed the world. For the people who had eyes to see and ears to hear, it gave life a whole new meaning.

PONDER THIS: In Paul's day information traveled slowly. There were no newspapers, public libraries, or Internets to facilitate communication and new discovery. Information and truth was slow to spread. But on the positive side, the potential for spreading false information was less.

Thus, when someone came along with new information, people would gather to listen.

Today, despite all the accessible libraries, TV's, radios, books, newspapers, magazines, and even the Internet, government control of information and truth is worse than it has ever been.

Governments always operate the same ... the only things that change are the techniques and tools for stifling the truth and controlling people.

WHAT IS AN APOSTLE?

Let's look briefly at the definition of the word "apostle" since it is part of the title of this book — "The Acts of the Apostles."

The English word "apostle" is an approximate transliteration of the Greek "*apostolos*." "Apostolos" is the noun form of the verb "*apostolo*" which means "to send" or "to set off" (i.e., to designate for something special). Thus, an apostle is one who is sent for a special purpose or designated to do something special.

"Apostle" was not merely a title or a rank; it meant more. When someone identified himself as an apostle he claimed to be a special envoy for the one who sent or assigned him. An apostle was sent by someone to do the sender's particular bidding. An apostle's actions pointed to the one who sent him ... and the emphasis was upon the sender, not upon the one being sent. This is the case with the apostles in the book of Acts. The apostles were sent by Jesus to do His bidding. They were not doing their own bidding. Their acts were the works that Jesus was doing through them. The emphasis was upon Jesus, not upon them.

This book is called "The Acts of The Apostles." Those "acts" that occurred through the apostles pointed directly to Jesus. The book of Acts is an account of the beginning works (acts) of the Reign of King Jesus.

ACTS 20:15-24 PAUL'S TRUE COURAGE

And having sailed from there, the next day we arrived opposite Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and the next day we came to Miletus.

For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus so he might avoid spending time in Asia: for he was hastening, if possible, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the ecclesia.

And when they had come to him, he said to them, You know well that from the first day that I arrived in Asia (Minor) I was among you the whole time,

Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with tears, and trials, which befell me by the plots of the Jews:

And I kept back nothing that was of benefit to you, but have recounted to you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house,

Bearing witness both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, about repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not

knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Except that in each city the holy spirit witnesses to me, saying that bonds and tribulations await me.

Nevertheless, I do not say that I count my soul valuable to me, as I should complete my course and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to witness fully of the grace of God.

AT THIS POINT, Paul and his colleagues were sailing southward along the coast of Asia Minor, intending to reach Jerusalem by the time the Jews were celebrating their Feast of Pentecost. The Jews held their Feast of Pentecost fifty days after Passover, thus we know from this record that Paul intended to make the trip from Philippi to Jerusalem in fifty days.

It is important to note that the Jewish schedule for their Feast of Pentecost was different from the Mosaic schedule. The Jews scheduled their Pentecost 50 days after Passover. The Mosaic calendar, on the other hand, scheduled Pentecost 50 days after the offering of the Firstfruits ... which happened a bit later (Lev. 23:9-15-16; Dt. 16:9). I point this out to show that the Jewish feasts were from Babylon and not from Moses.

Now, again, the question arises: why was Paul concerned about this Jewish Feast in Jerusalem – especially since it was not the original Pentecost of Israel? There were two reasons: 1. He needed to warn the ecclesia in Jerusalem that a persecution was coming upon them from the Jews. 2. It would afford Paul an opportunity to connect with more Israelites from surrounding lands who would be coming to Jerusalem for the feast. Israelites, in general, not unlike churches today, mistakenly assumed that the Jewish feasts were the same as the old Mosaic feasts.

Paul needed to be in Jerusalem at the Jewish Pentecost ... not to keep the feast itself, but to make contact with the lost sheep that would be gathered there.

In verse 18 Paul sends a message to the elders of the ecclesia at Ephesus. He didn't go to Ephesus, since he had just spent two years there, and was nearly killed in the process. His time was limited, so he requested that the Ephesian elders join him at Miletus on the coast. These elders were not officers of a church. These were older spokesmen and representatives of the ecclesia at Ephesus.

We note that Paul is finally giving his attention where it should be – to the ecclesias instead of the synagogues. As he went from town to town, always the Jews lay in wait for him to kill him or imprison him.

Paul admonished the elders that he had worked hard and had followed his mission to the best of his ability. From the way he phrased his statements, Paul sensed that his enemies would overcome him eventually ... possibly in Jerusalem. He says "*I know not what awaits me there.*" He was going in among the Jews who hated him.

But Paul said he was prepared for the worst. He said that the holy spirit within him (his motivation to do God's will) strengthened him for the upcoming persecution.

WHAT IS A "SOUL"?

In verse 24, the Greek word "*psuche*" is translated "life" in the KJV Bible. It should have been translated "breath" or "soul" ... not "life." The Greek word for "life" is "*dzoay*," not "*psuche*." "*Psuche*" should always be translated "breath" or "soul." This leads us to a question. Why have the translators of English

versions of the Bible changed the word and replaced "soul" with "life"?

This verse throws a monkey wrench into the gears of church orthodoxy. Churches teach that men's souls are immortal. Now, if it were true that men's souls are immortal then Paul's soul certainly would have been immortal. But, if he did have an immortal soul, why then would he have placed no value in it? If, as churches teach, the saving of man's immortal soul was the purpose of the whole Christian experience, the great plan of salvation, and the motive behind the sacrifice of Christ, then for Paul to have uttered such a statement would have been inexplicable. According to church thinking, to lose one's life is acceptable, but to lose one's "soul" is the worst thing possible! But, Paul's statement forces the reader to question this orthodoxy.

The doctrine of the "immortal soul" is, in fact, a very destructive pagan belief adopted by the churches. This false doctrine is at the root of a great many doctrinal errors. For an in-depth examination of this pervasive error, see our *Kingdom Bible Studies, lessons 11-15*.

To a Greek, "*psuche*" meant the physical nature, personality and basic drives – like hunger, fear, lust, the need to breathe, etc.. Soulish things were of the lower nature and basic drives. Spiritual things were of the higher nature and selfless motives. To indulge one's soul was to give in to the lower drives, selfishness, and lust. On the other hand, to withstand those urges was to control the soulish drives and seek the higher spiritual values.

When Paul said he counted his *breath/soul* of no importance, he meant that he was willing to forgo the needs of the soul: comfort, regular meals, his freedom, even his soul's ultimate desire: to stay alive.

In conclusion, it is important to look carefully each time the word "soul" (Gk. *psuche*) appears in your English Bible. A good grasp of this truth is important because without it one can be tricked by the churches into thinking wrongly about the meaning of "soul." The end of that

error is that one can come to believe that “souls” are immortal, and that all MEN and animals are immortal in the ultimate sense (yes, animals have souls too [see Gen. 1:20 & 24 – fish, birds, & animals = “*living souls*”]). So, if men and animals have immortal souls they (the souls) could never die, and would continue living after “death.” At death they would just continue uninterrupted in some other form of existence. This is normally called “reincarnation” or “transmigration of the soul.” But churches have adopted it and given it another name: “immortality of the soul.”

It is a pagan doctrine, and it is one more evidence that churches are NOT CHRISTIAN, but rather pagan counterfeits created to confuse and obfuscate the truths of the Bible.

QUESTION: Is it possible that Paul’s courage came by his knowledge that Christians can lose their immortal souls? Paul was in no danger of losing his immortal soul because he had a good track record. But the very possibility of losing his immortal soul, and the fact that Paul would be willing to risk it, is what he was referring to when he said his mission was more important to him than his very soul. What about that for a reason?

ACTS 20:25-28 CHRIST’S BLOOD PURCHASED THE ECCLESIA

And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I went preaching the Kingship, shall not see my face again.

Wherefore I witness to you this day, that I am clean from the blood of all men.

For I held back nothing to declare all the counsel of God to you.

Pay attention to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the holy spirit put you overseers, to shepherd the ecclesia of God, which He has purchased with the blood of his own Son.

THESE are Paul’s farewell admonitions. He says that whatever may befall him in Jerusalem, he does not expect to see these friends in Asia Minor again. Obviously, his trip to Jerusalem was not for a holiday feast. He was going there to engage the battle for truth ... and he expected trouble.

He was talking to the elders from Ephesus. “Elder” is not a church office. It simply means “older” and presumably wiser, more experienced, more capable of leading and giving good counsel. Likewise, the title “overseer” indicates special service; one who has distinguished himself and is honored as a leader by his fellow ecclesians. He is like a patriarch; someone who is respected in the community; someone to whom the people have learned to look for counsel.

Overseers were not officers in a church. They weren’t voted into office. They were elders and overseers by virtue of their age, character, and recognition by the people. Their offices were not elected, but rather achieved by a life of distinction. It was natural; organic. Like the office of father, mother, or patriarch.

Also, we should comment on who is being talked about in verse 28. You’ll notice that the last part of verse 28 makes a very interesting statement. Let’s read it again ... first the way it is in the King James Version, and then in the Greek. This should help reveal the conflict between what the churches teach and what the Bible actually says. The King James Version (the church version) says that the “*Holy Ghost made them overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*” That’s the King James rendition.

We know from our earlier Acts chapters that holy spirit is not a being, and thus has no blood. So the “blood” cannot be the holy spirit’s. Some have assumed it refers to Yahweh’s blood. This, they claim, is proof that Yahweh was Jesus ... whose blood did redeem the ecclesia.

To get to the bottom of this, let us read a corrected translation from the Greek, for it indicates something quite different:

“...over which the holy spirit has made you overseers, to feed the ecclesia of God, which He (God) has purchased with the blood of his own.”

We’re talking about *“the blood of his own.”* Not *“His own blood,”* but *“the blood of his own.”* His own ... what?

When translating Greek, sentences often leave words out which the reader must supply according to the context. In this verse the word *“Son”* was obviously implied, but left for the the reader to supply. Yahweh purchased the ecclesia with *the blood of his own Son*. You may want to make a note of that in your Bible because it is important.

You may wonder why the King James people translated verse 28 so as to make it appear that the blood came from either Yahweh or the so-called Holy Ghost. The reason is simple: it was done to try to uphold the doctrine of the Trinity. The King James people perpetuated that pagan doctrine by purposely mistranslating the Greek text to make their Bible say what they wanted.

ACTS 20:29-31 BEWARE OF PRIESTS, PROPHETS, AND PRINCES

For I know that after my departing, grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

And out of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perversions, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore keep awake, remembering that for three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

PAUL warned the people about false teachers and “grievous wolves” appearing among them. He said some from their own ranks would rise up and become false teachers. These are the most insidious kind. They are the enemies working from within – not enemies from outside.

In the book of Ezekiel we find examples of these grievous wolves. Ezekiel not only speaks to Paul’s day but to ours as well. It reads like a modern day exposé of the Church and State conspiracy in America.

25. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion

ravens the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravens the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

Ezekiel 22:25-27

Israel had turned from Yahweh’s sabbaths. Among their sins they had refused to honor the 7th-year debt release. God’s law commanded Israelites to release debts to one another on the 7th year (the sabbath year). But they had refused to release debts, and had ignored God’s law. This is one of the tactics for the ruling elite to gain power over the people.

Debt makes slaves. Permanent debt makes perpetual slaves ... like in the United States where the people have accepted the government plan to put them into perpetual debt. The government does this by virtue of the power given it by the Constitution:

The Congress shall have Power ... To borrow money on the credit of the United States;

Article 1, Section 8

The government borrows from the FED on the credit of the people of the States (i.e., the people). The debt grows and is unpayable. Thus Americans are in perpetual debt.

But if debts were canceled once every seven years, according to Bible law, debt bondage would be limited to the generation that made it. Powerful hegemonies and families of ruling elite would not prevail. One generation could not put the next into slavery.

28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies to them, saying, Thus says the Lord God, when the Lord has not spoken.

Ezekiel 22:28

The princes devise ways to plunder the people, while the prophets devise ways to confuse the people and keep them compliant (“*daubed them with untempered mortar*”). We hear of many conspiracies, but this is the greatest and longest conspiracy of all time: a conspiracy of both the priests and the princes. These are natural co-conspirators because they hold key positions of power. They are “the state”: the wolves and lions ravens the people – to shed blood, destroy souls, and get dishonest gain.

29. *The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.*

Ezekiel 22:29

When the elite practice usury, and have robbed, oppressed, and vexed the poor and stranger, and have done it for a long time, it can only be because the citizens are condoning it. Ezekiel 22 correctly defines the element so we can see the conspiracy and the oppression. The priests and the princes rule when the people are idolaters. When there is a great oppression in the land it is caused by the princes and the priests ruling centrally. However such oppression cannot endure unless the common people ignorantly support them.

1. *And the word of the Lord came to me, saying,*

2. *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?*

Ezekiel 34:1,2

These are the “grievous wolves” rising up among us.

Who are our worst enemies? Not the foreigner! Not the outsiders ... as some have said. Rather, it is the enemy within. The enemies of Christ are in the governments and in the churches. From those positions of power they are ravening us: we are their prey. They are devils. Ezekiel calls them “lions” and “wolves” among sheep. They feed themselves and they do not feed the flocks.

3. *You eat the fat (i.e., the best), and you clothe yourself with the wool, you kill them that are fatted: but you feed not the flock.*

Ezekiel 34:3

This indictment against priests and princes should put us on guard. Anyone with a functioning brain can see the correlation in our day. For instance, politicians vote themselves generous pay raises in congress.

They are paid ten times as much as the average American. They live lives of decadence, and become land barons, and still they want more. And the people love to have it so (Jer. 5:31). That’s only one example of “*the wolves ravening the prey for dishonest gain.*”

4. *The diseased have you not strengthened, neither have you healed that which was sick, neither have you bound up that which was broken, neither have you brought again that which was driven away, neither have you sought that which was lost; but with force (violence) and with cruelty have you ruled them.*

Ezekiel 34:4

Ezekiel gave us a general description of rulers, priests and princes; men of established religion and government. They raven the prey, and devour the sheep. Meanwhile, the victims gullibly suppose that the wolves are helping them. It is ironic.

This, then, is the theme of Paul’s teaching in Acts. Paul told the people they could opt for a new start with a tried and true form of society called an “ecclesia” – with Christ as King. He gave them the laws of God and told them to honor their Lord Jesus, their King. He warned the elders against ‘grievous wolves’ (thieves and murderers disguised as priests and princes) among them speaking “perverse things” and teaching them to deny their God, create their own laws, form democracies, republics, central governments, and churches.

Look at the wolves of our day: the priests, politicians, and bankers. They are greedy, power-mad, and think the Earth is theirs to plunder. They care about no one but themselves. They build empires by deceiving the people and stealing from them. They are prominent men, women, and institutions.

Paul warned about the very people and organizations that today are admired by most Americans.

QUESTION: The conspiracy Ezekiel talks about may have happened, but that was centuries ago. Just because the priests and princes of Ezekiel’s day were allied together to take advantage of people, it doesn’t mean ministers and politicians in America today have the same motive! How is your conspiracy theory any different from other unproved conspiracy theories?

ACTS 20:32-38 QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

And now I commend you to the Lord, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.

I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.

You yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my needs, and to them that were with me.

I have shown you all things, that in so laboring it is necessary to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how

he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And having said these things, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

And they all wept very much, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

Sorrowing especially for the words which he spake, that they will not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

THE “inheritance” in verse 32 is not a future home in the sky. Paul is talking about how to recognize their blessings then and there. He wants his brethren to accept and be thankful for the blessings of Christ; to take responsibility for their land, their properties, their families, and their freedoms. In order to do this they must learn and apply the principles of God ... and learn how to recognize and avoid the wolves and lions disguised as priests and politicians. Paul says they take your inheritance ... and we can see that they have done just that here in America. Paul tells them that it is their responsibility to be good stewards over the gifts and inheritances with which Christ has blessed them.

In verses 33-35 Paul defines a true shepherd. A shepherd is not a ruler. He's not a president or a senator.

A real leader is concerned about the welfare of the people, the same as a father should be concerned about the welfare of his family.

In stating his own motives, Paul hopes to define a pattern to apply to leaders. He says, in essence:

- A real leader doesn't covet his people's silver, gold or apparel.

- A real leader walks and works with the people, not above them ... leading by example, not by force and deception ... not amassing power over people, but helping them.

- A real leader supports the weak.

- And a real leader knows and understands that it is a greater blessing to give than to receive.

These qualities are not seen among the so-called leaders of today.

Look at the quality of leadership mentioned in verse 35: “... *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*” Who could be so blind as to think the established leaders today are interested in giving rather than getting? What government or church today actually helps the people? Do governments give, or do they take?

In order to give, one must first have. If you don't have, you cannot give. The government cannot give of its own because it has nothing of its own. Anything the government has was taken from us. Government TAKES, and does not give. It takes from all, and returns a portion of the stolen goods to a select few ... keeping the lion's share for itself. This is called “government,” and is the reverse of Jesus' maxim. Government operates on the maxim that it is more blessed (for them) to receive than to give.

Sadly, most people still think the government is here to help them. But, anything government has to “give” was first stolen from the people ... under the pretense of helping! It is ludicrous to think that we can benefit from letting government steal from us and rule us.

People who think they get something from government are naive. Everyone who approves

government is sanctioning the crime. They accept robbery and oppression, under the banner of “civilization,” “democracy,” and “security.” Those who look to government for help are the ones who keep it in power by giving it a false air of legitimacy. Such people sanction government atrocities because they think they benefit from it. The thieves and murderers that make up the government wouldn't be able to stay in power very long if the people weren't willing to participate in the crimes because they hope to share in the booty.

The truth is government is a racket, and we shouldn't empower it! So-called government “help” has ruined this land and its people. How do we get people to see they have been turned into wards of the state; government addicts; junkies; accessories to the crime?

In Acts 20 Paul gives us an overview of a true leader – a true shepherd. A leader in the community gives, he does not take. Paul gave the truth of God's Word, and he gave of himself. And when he had to bid farewell and go to Jerusalem, they knew he was a friend and were sorry to see him go.

Paul sailed south from Miletus and then turned eastward along the bottom coastline, stopping in some of the ports. Then they sailed across The Great Sea to Phoenicia, and journeyed inland to Jerusalem ... and thus into perhaps the greatest trial of his life.

A great battle awaited Paul at Jerusalem ... a battle that took him all the way to Rome. We will follow him in the concluding chapters of this book.

END OF CHAPTER TWENTY

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

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POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. National religions and holidays usually reflect historical events important to that nation. Israel was no exception. Yahweh ordained national festivals in commemoration of Israel's national beginnings and of the covenant between them.

Names and some features of Israel's original holidays, given through Moses, were later copied by other nations and religions. They developed feasts, sacrifices, and rituals somewhat similar to those in Israel's Old Covenant. But they were counterfeit. They gave their rituals Israelitish names, but that did not make them legitimate.

Babylon, for example, adopted counterfeit feasts and rituals with names taken from Israel – not unlike the way Rome took Christian terms and perverted them into Catholicism.

2. Jerusalem of Paul's day was a branch of Babylon. Her religion, her government, and many of her inhabitants were Babylonian. Yet they copied Israelitish names and titles.

Thus, Bible readers often do not realize the difference between Mosaic culture and the later Jewish culture of Jerusalem in the first century AD. In fact, people today still confuse the Zoroastrian religion of Judaism with Old Covenant Israelism.

3. The features of Babylon's religion were, in turn, exported to Jerusalem, and the Jews continued to perfect the imposture. After centuries of confusion, Babylon's religion (Zoroastrianism) evolved into Judaism ... and Judaism was pawned off as the religion of the Bible ... and the term "Jew" mistakenly came to mean "Israelite."

4. The fact that most Jews were NOT Israelites, and their religion was NOT of Israel, explains why they hated and murdered Christ, and persecuted Paul and the rest of the apostles.

5. Via Judaism and the churches, Babylonianism has fashioned today's world ... which explains why modern

society has gone so far astray. Many who claim to be followers of Jesus are actually following Judaism, and thus Zoroastrianism. That makes them followers of "Mystery Babylon" rather than followers of Christ.

6. When Judaism moved from Babylon to Jerusalem it brought Babylon's calendar with it. The Jewish lunar calendar was not Israel's calendar. It was Babylon's.

7. Priests and princes are usually enemies to the common people. Such political offices are designed to funnel power to a select few who can then pillage and plunder the people. True leaders help the people rather than exploit and feed off them.

ANSWERS:

pg.3

No one suggested the Feast of Unleavened Bread was unimportant. Far from it! It was so important that anyone ignoring it was to be cut off from Israel.

The question is not whether it was important, but whether or not it was applicable after the dissolution of the Old Covenant.

The ordinances governing the keeping of Israel's national holidays were based, and therefore contingent, upon two things: 1) That Israel be a sovereign nation; 2) That the Old Covenant be in force.

Both these contingencies were lost long before Paul's time. Israel broke the covenant (1Sam. 8), and Yahweh divorced her for harlotry (Jer. 3:6-11). He then sent her away into captivity and slavery under Assyria and Babylon. From then on, neither the festivals celebrating her nationhood, nor her covenant with Yahweh, were pertinent or applicable.

Secondly, the words "for ever" (in Exodus 12:14 & 17) are mistranslations. The Hebrew word is "olam": which means literally "not within sight." In other words, the end was not in sight; it was yet

undetermined.

To say that the end is yet undetermined certainly does not suggest that there would be no end. Thus, "olam" denoted a length of time whose end was undetermined.

The Old Covenant, along with its feasts, sacrifices, and various ordinances, was "olam" ... but it had an end. Thus "for ever" is not a correct translation of the word "olam."

Furthermore, the Ten Commandments and many other laws of God predated the Old Covenant. The Covenant was added to existing law. The pre-existing law did not originate with the Old Covenant, nor did it end that Covenant was dissolved.

pg. 5

God commands us to keep the Sabbath. However, the churches have injected much confusion into the sabbath issue ... partly by opting for the Roman calendar instead of the Mosaic calendar. Only the Mosaic calendar can show the original sabbath.

pg. 8

By definition, a "soul" can die and is not immortal.

Moses and Ezekiel both say that souls can sin and thus are mortal:

"And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sins ..."
Nu. 15:28

"The soul that sins, it shall die."
Ez. 18:4 & 20

pg. 10

The Beast System has always incorporated the same crimes to achieve power. It is the same today. This is not my theory, it is God's. Ignore it at your own peril!