

The Passover Parable

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— Mesquite, Texas —

The Passover Parable
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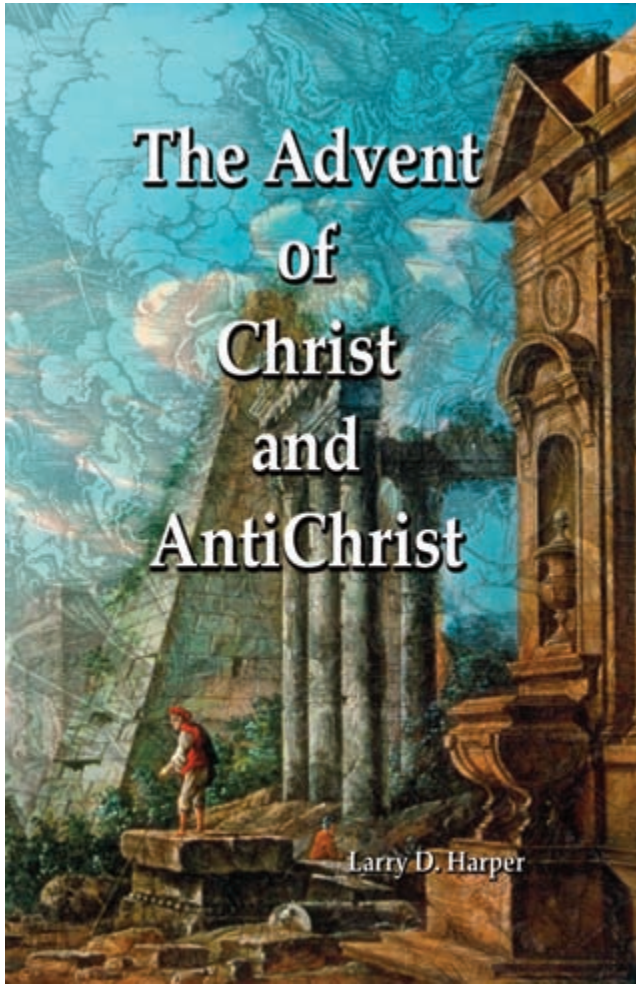
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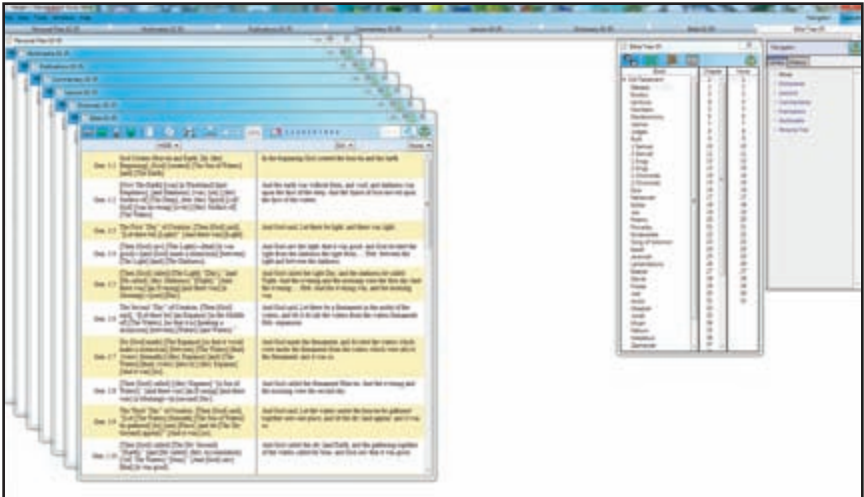
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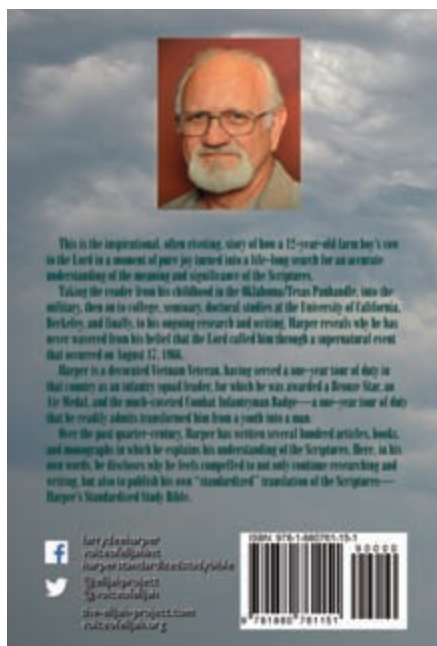
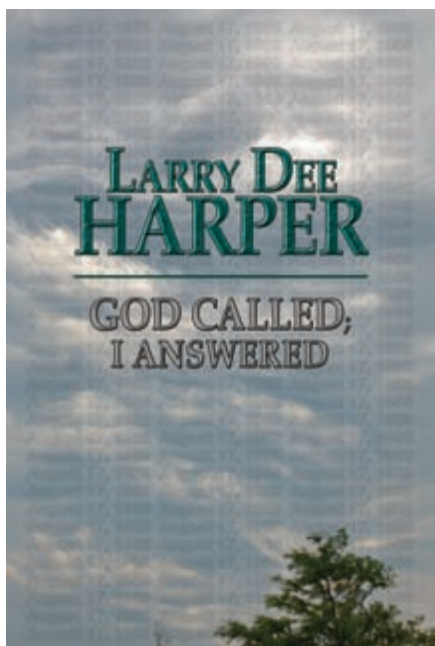


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Introduction

Jesus constantly spoke in parables, dramatizing His message with *parabolic pantomime*.¹ In so doing, He was merely continuing the practice of the Old Testament Prophets, whom God often directed to state their message *symbolically*, in *parabolic pantomime*.²

The *parabolic pantomimes* of Scripture vary, but all have one thing in common. Whether it be Abraham's offering of Isaac as a sacrifice,³ the death of Moses,⁴ or Elijah's confrontation of the prophets of Baal,⁵ each of the *parabolic pantomimes* was conducted according to God's specific directions.

The greatest of all the *parabolic pantomimes* in the Scriptures, however, is the intricately detailed set of directives that God issued the sons of Israel through Moses before, during, and after their Exodus from Egypt. As with the *parabolic pantomimes* conducted by all the other Prophets, Moses conducted this *parabolic pantomime* under God's direct supervision. When

¹ See "The Parabolic Pantomimes of Jesus Christ," *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.

² Jeremiah 51:63; Ezekiel 4; Hosea 1:2.

³ Genesis 22.

⁴ Numbers 27:12-14.

⁵ 1 Kings 18.

viewed as a complete *parabolic image*, the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable appears to be nothing more than a mockery of the ancient Egyptian belief in the Pharaoh's triumphant journey through death, which culminated with his resurrection from the dead and his ascension from the top of the primeval Mountain of God, the pyramid.

Considered in detail, however, the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable is an incredibly detailed message concerning God's purpose in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the coming King of Israel. Unlike the deceased Pharaoh, who could never actually triumph over death, the Passover Parable *parabolically* declared beforehand that the crucified Christ would triumph. It insisted He would not only arise in the resurrection but would also, in yet another *parabolic pantomime*, ascend from a mountain into the sky and go to Heaven, just as the Egyptians believed the Pharaoh did after death. But the Passover Parable also tells us that, as the Passover Lamb of God, Jesus Christ would give His life to protect those He leads out of bondage, through death, and into the resurrection.

The Passover Parable provides the underpinning that ties together not only the message of the Pentateuch but the entire message of the Hebrew Scriptures as well. It reveals that Moses wrote concerning Jesus Christ, just as Jesus stated in His challenge to the scribes and Pharisees who refused to believe Him:

*"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me;
for he wrote of Me."
(John 5:46)*

To understand the message that lies hidden in the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable, however, one must begin to think like an ancient Egyptian. For that is exactly how the sons of Israel who came out of Egypt thought; and they fully understood the *parabolically stated* message of the Passover Parable.

Hebrews, Canaanites, or Egyptians?

Christians sometimes speak of the sons of Israel who came out of Egypt and accepted the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai as though they were “Jews.” That is a common misnomer, but the Jews as a people and Judaism as a religion came into existence nearly one thousand years later, during the Diaspora, after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had sacked and burned Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C. and had taken the sons of Israel captive to Babylon. Only then did the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually give up Canaanite idolatry and seek the God of their fathers alone. With that, Judaism and the people known as the Jews were born.

Another common misconception is that the sons of Israel who lived in Egypt prior to the Exodus⁶ worshipped the God of the Bible in the same way that they did after divine revelation came through Moses. That is a misconception only because prior to the giving of the Law at Sinai, these people had no definitive knowledge of the God Who is. Although it has not been fully appreciated by scholars, God’s revelation of Himself to the Patriarchs was not for the purpose of establishing a

⁶ Exodus 1–11.

religion; it was to give them *the promise* of a future *inheritance*.⁷ He explains that to Moses this way:

*God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but {by} My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them."
(Exodus 6:2–3)*

So what did the sons of Israel whom God delivered from Egypt under Moses actually believe? The answer to this question is not only pertinent, it is absolutely crucial to an accurate understanding of the message of the Hebrew Scriptures. Only after answering the question correctly can one fully appreciate what God did in establishing the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai as the precepts of an entirely new religion.⁸

Scholars have customarily used the names that ancient people gave their children to determine what gods they worshipped, since the ancients often gave their children theophoric names containing the name of their favorite god. If you look at the personal names in the census list found in the first two chapters of Numbers, it is obvious that the allegiance of the descendants of Israel who came out of Egypt was firmly fixed on El Shaddai ("God Almighty"), the name by which God revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁹

⁷ See L. Harper, *Not All Israel Is Israel* in The Resurrection Theology Series.

⁸ Exodus 20:1 ff.

⁹ Genesis 17:1; 26:23–25; 28:3–4; 35:9–12.

Nearly seventy percent of the names in that census list contain either El or Shaddai as a prefix or suffix. Consider these names: *Elizur*, *Zurishaddai*, *Nethanel*, *Eliab*, *Elishama*, *Gamaliel*, *Ammishaddai*, *Pagiel*, and *Eliasaph*.¹⁰

It is fairly certain from those names that these people worshipped El Shaddai, the God who had appeared so briefly to their ancestors four hundred years earlier. But what did they actually know *about* Him? Little if anything in actual fact. They knew from the Canaanite religion that the God El was the head of the Canaanite pantheon.¹¹ They also knew that Jerusalem was the principal city where the Canaanite god El had been worshipped by the Jebusites in Abraham's day.¹² Even the writer of the Book of Hebrews agrees that the god worshipped by the Canaanites living in Jerusalem was, in fact, God Himself.¹³

It is not a coincidence that the God of the Bible revealed Himself to the Patriarchs by identifying Himself as a god with whom they were already familiar—El, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon. He was simply speaking to them in terms they could understand. But He did so fully intending to use *parabolic imagery* taken from the Canaanite myth concerning El to teach the descendants of the Patriarchs, the sons of Israel, the Truth about Himself.

¹⁰ Numbers 1:5–15.

¹¹ M. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, 1955.

¹² Genesis 14:17–24.

¹³ Hebrews 7:1.

Was the God Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually the chief god among many other Canaanite gods? Of course not. He plainly states there are no gods other than Himself.¹⁴ But it is always easier to take something that is known and understood and use that to teach about something that is not known or understood. That is exactly why God *parabolically* identified Himself to the Patriarchs as the Canaanite god El. Having done that, He could teach the sons of Israel four hundred years later how He differed.

To the Canaanites, the god El was the creator of all things, “the creator of heaven and earth.” He was the “father of the gods,” who ruled over all other gods as the “eternal king” or “king of eternity.” His title was “Bull El,” and his authority included the right to depose other gods and establish as king those gods he favored. Only at the decree of El, for example, could the god of wisdom, Kothar-wa-Hasis, “build the house”¹⁵ of the storm-god Baal, the Canaanite god of the resurrection.

According to Canaanite mythology, El lived in a tent on a mountain, at or near which was a river that served as the place for the judgment of the dead. The “assembly” of the gods met on his mountain, in El’s tent. There they discussed matters relevant to his reign as king. After the gods had thoroughly dis-

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 4:35, 39.

¹⁵ “Build a house” is a Hebrew idiom with specific *meaning*. See *Not All Israel Is Israel* and other volumes in The Resurrection Theology Series.

cussed an issue, El made his decree from the mountain. His decree then became the law of the gods.¹⁶

At the time of the Exodus, however, the sons of Israel were familiar not only with the doctrines of Canaanite religion, but also with those of Egyptian religion. For over four hundred years they had lived in Goshen,¹⁷ an area in the northeastern Nile delta where the culture and religions of both Canaan and Egypt were in constant flux. The gods of both Canaan and Egypt were worshipped there.

Although they had continued to worship the Canaanite god El Shaddai as their personal god for over four hundred years, the sons of Israel who came out of Egypt were all too familiar with the gods and goddesses of the Egyptian religion. So it should not surprise us to discover that in revealing Himself to the sons of Israel, God not only used *parabolic imagery* related to the Canaanite god El, He also compared Himself to, and contrasted Himself with, the principal god of the Egyptian religion as well. That god was Osiris.

¹⁶ E.T. Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods*, p. 147.

¹⁷ Genesis 45:10; Exodus 8:22.

The Myth of Osiris

For more than three thousand years, Osiris—the Egyptian god of the blessed dead—was the Egyptians' most important god. From the Pharaohs who built the massive pyramids as their tombs, down to the ordinary peasant villager buried in a pauper's grave, every pious Egyptian was concerned with attaining resurrection from the dead. All together looked to the god Osiris as their great hope—the one in whom they too could attain resurrection.

The primary sources of information that we have concerning the Egyptian god Osiris are the Pyramid Texts (texts found written on the tomb walls in the pyramids), the Coffin Texts (texts found written on coffins) and the Book of the Dead (a burial papyrus prepared for a high-ranking Egyptian official).

The purpose of all these texts was to assist the dead in finding their way through the realm of the dead and thereby improve their chances for entry into the resurrection. Their primary concern, therefore, is to describe various events that one may expect to occur between the time of death and the moment of resurrection. They do not provide a coherently written myth about the trek of Osiris through the realm of the dead, however. For that, we must look elsewhere.

The only knowledge we have of the Egyptian myth that stands behind the above mentioned texts actually comes from Greek writers. The Greek writer Plutarch, about the middle of the first century A.D., produced the most complete account of the myth. Plutarch's purpose in writing was to provide Greeks with information that would help them understand the Egyptian preoccupation with death and resurrection.

According to Plutarch, Osiris was an ancient Egyptian king who was murdered by his enemy, Seth, who sealed him in a box and dumped the box into the Nile. The box floated out to sea and eventually washed ashore along the coast of Lebanon. But Isis, Osiris' wife, searched for the box, and after finding it, brought the body of Osiris back to Egypt.

Soon afterward, however, Seth found the corpse and cut it up into fourteen pieces, scattering them throughout the land. When Isis began gathering the members of Osiris, her son Horus engaged his father's murderer in battle.

Isis eventually completed the task of gathering the members of Osiris, and Horus defeated Seth. Horus then applied the magic necessary to (as the texts say) "open the mouth" of his father Osiris, thus providing him entry into the resurrection. Thereafter, Osiris ruled in the west as king of the resurrected dead.

Egyptian Symbolic Ritual

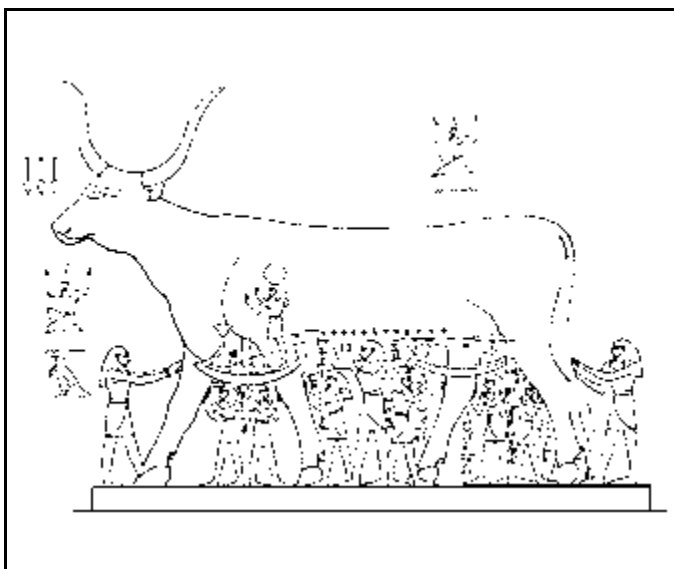
Only recently have Egyptologists begun to appreciate the sophistication inherent in ancient Egyptian theology. Not so long ago, many scholars thought their religion should be categorized as the product of primitive, “prelogical” thinking.¹⁸ The unstated premise was that mankind’s ability to engage in “logical” thought somehow began with the Greeks in the fifth century B.C.

As recently as 1961, a leading scholar in the field of Egyptology scathingly termed Egyptian religious tradition a “vast accumulation of mythological rubbish inherited from the past.”¹⁹ His remarks reflect the fact that the Egyptians never discarded any formulated religious thought, no matter how much it might appear to contradict some other religious concept.

The sky, for example, was depicted in artists’ renderings as supported by a goddess who looks much like she is doing push-ups. In other depictions, however, the sky was shown as being held up by four pillars at the four corners of the Earth. If you didn’t like either of these explanations, there were others.

¹⁸ W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 122 ff.

¹⁹ A.H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 227.



The Egyptian theologians also conceived of the sky as the underside of the Cow of Heaven, the goddess Hathor. In this depiction, the cow's belly is supported by the air-god, Shu. The sun-god Re is standing in his solar boat as it moves through the stars of the heavens.

The ancients thought the sun-god made his circuit through the heavens and the underworld in a boat because they believed the Earth was surrounded by water—the sea above and the sea below.

In keeping with this widespread belief, the Hebrew word in the Old Testament that is normally translated "heaven" is a compound word that *literally means* "sea of waters." Likewise, the Hebrew word for the realm of the dead—*Sheol*—is a compound word that *means* "sea of El."

The Prophets of God mocked this and other ludicrous concepts in their prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus Christ by appropriating them for their own purposes.

The postulations of scholars in past years are demeaning to the mind-set of the ancients and completely without basis in actual fact. Their mistaken notions stem from a misunderstanding of the intentions of ancient Egyptian theologians. The ancients had already concluded that the other realm was a “tremendous mystery.”²⁰ That is, it was beyond intellectual comprehension. In that, they agree with modern philosophers who contend that it is impossible to even think about God without placing limitations on Him.

Since the ancient Egyptians thought an intellectual understanding of the other realm was not possible, they used symbols to represent it. So the sky could be supported by a goddess, or it could be held up by four pillars. It didn’t matter that the symbols appeared to contradict one another because the only purpose of the symbol was to describe some particular feature of the unknown by means of the known.

Having understood the purpose of the Egyptian symbols, Egyptologists now realize that, when combined, the two distinguishing characteristics of ancient Egyptian religion—ritual and symbol—explain far more about the beliefs of the Egyptians than has heretofore been recognized. That’s because the Egyptians believed that by conducting *symbolic* religious rituals, they could influence the outcome of events in the other realm.

An appropriate example of the Egyptians’ use of ritual and symbol is the burial ritual that they con-

²⁰ V. Tobin, *Theological Principles of Egyptian Religion*, p. 21 ff.

ducted after the death of the Pharaoh. After the body of the king had been embalmed and mummified to protect it as much as possible against decay, it was carried in procession down to the Nile and placed on a boat. The boat then carried the body across to the western bank of the Nile, where the body was led in procession to the base of the Pharaoh's pyramid tomb. The priests then conducted enigmatic magical rites that were supposed to "open the mouth" of the deceased king. These rites were meant to enable him to be resurrected.

Finally, the Egyptians laid the mummified body of the king to rest in the pyramid. There it awaited the reunion of his spirit and soul with the body after his soul had successfully made its way through the realm of the dead.²¹ The ceremonial symbols of this ritual include, among other things, the Nile, the boat, the magical rites, and the pyramid. These were all intended to represent geographical features and events in the other realm. But to fully understand them, you must first understand the theology of Osiris as it pertained to the Pharaoh.

²¹ A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, p. 320 ff.

Pharaoh — Son of God

The ancient Egyptian Pharaoh was, in this life, revered as *The Name*—that is, the heir—of the god Osiris. He was Horus, son of Osiris. When he died, he passed into the realm of the dead with the setting sun and became “one” with his father Osiris.²² He then traveled through the underworld—the Egyptian version of hell—to the foot of the Mountain of God, where he was judged. After being found guiltless, the Pharaoh (who was now Osiris) went up the Mountain and ascended to Heaven to assume the throne as king of the blessed dead.

According to Egyptian mythology, the deceased Pharaoh (who carried *The Name* Horus in this life) always became Osiris and attained resurrection from the dead. He thus provided opportunity for resurrection to ordinary Egyptians, who likewise sought res-

²² Jesus is referring to this *parabolic image* from the Passover Parable when He says this:

“And I am no more in the world; and {yet} they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, {the name} which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We {are}. . . . And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one.”

(John 17:11, 22)

urrection in and through him. They believed that any believer who successfully attained the resurrection did so by becoming “one” with Osiris, the ancient Pharaoh who had died and been resurrected.

In the burial ritual described in the last chapter, the Nile River represented the obstacle presented by



The drawing above replicates one found on the tomb of a high Egyptian official at the beginning of the 19th Dynasty (ca. 1300 B.C.). The deceased is depicted as the god Osiris lying on the boat and held upright in front of the funerary stela at the tomb.

The scene depicts the actual burial ritual, but also symbolically represents events that must occur in the afterlife. The priest holding the mummy upright before the funerary stela, for example, is dressed as the dog or jackal-god Anubis who

was the guardian of the tomb. Anubis protected the mummy against the evil forces of the night.

The crossing of the Nile in the boat is not shown in this drawing but is depicted in other similar drawings. The mountain shown rising out of the picture to the right of the pyramid-like tomb is intended to represent the cosmic Mountain of God from which the deceased will ascend into the resurrection.

The two eyes over the tomb were meant to symbolically represent that

the “Sea of Reeds” in the underworld. By transporting the deceased king’s body across the Nile, the priests intended to ensure that his soul safely crossed the “Sea of Reeds” in the underworld. The boat that carried the body corresponded to that of the divine boatman whose services the deceased’s soul had to acquire when it reached the “Sea of Reeds.”



the two eyes of Horus, the sun and the moon had been restored after the “eye of Horus,” the moon, was lost in Horus’ battle with Seth, the enemy of his father Osiris. Only after the moon had been restored could the deceased enter into the resurrection.

God used the loss of the moon, i.e., the three day “dark of the moon,” to speak concerning the “three-day” interval between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That Moses also knew of God’s intention

can be seen by his mention of Israel’s need to make a three-day journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to God (Exodus 8:27). In actual fact, the journey to Mt. Sinai took the sons of Israel at least two months (Exodus 19:1).

The three-day journey between time of death and resurrection also lies behind Jesus’ statements concerning the “sign of Jonah” (see Matthew 12:39; 16:4). The connection between this belief and covenant sacrifice will be discussed in future publications.

The magical rites performed at the base of the pyramid represented the corresponding rites that had to take place in the other realm after the deceased's soul crossed the "Sea of Reeds." Only after Horus—that is, the recently deceased Pharaoh who carried *The Name* of his father Osiris—had defeated Seth, the serpent or monster that lived in that sea, could he "open the mouth" of his father Osiris.

Finally, the pyramid represented the primeval Mountain of God from which the newly resurrected king ascended to take his place among the stars in the heavens as king of the blessed dead.

The Journey Through Death

By conducting the *symbolic ritual* of burying the deceased Pharaoh's body in the pyramid, the Egyptians sought to ensure the safe passage of his soul through death. But they still believed that the journey through the realm of the dead was fraught with danger all along the way. Since there was apparently no definite sequence to the events that the Egyptians thought took place in the realm of the dead, for ease of understanding I will use the sequence God used in the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable.

During his journey through the underworld, the deceased Pharaoh, who had been Horus, *The Name of Osiris* while alive, proved himself to be Osiris, the firstborn of the gods, by hunting down and killing all other firstborn in the realm of the dead. As you can see from the following, the Pharaoh (Unas in this particular text) was assisted in this by other gods:

Unas hath weighed his word with the hidden god who hath no name, on the day of hacking in pieces the first-born. ... Khonsu the slayer of the wicked cutteth their throats and draweth out their intestines for it is he whom Unas sendeth to slaughter; and Shesmu cutteth them in pieces and boileth their members in his blazing caldrons of the night.

*... The mighty ones in heaven light the fire under the caldrons where are heaped up the thighs of the first-born ... Unas is the first-born of the first-born gods.*²³

This ritual killing of the firstborn seems to have been identified with the destruction of the damned in the realm of the dead. That was accomplished soon after midnight.²⁴ After killing all other firstborn, however, the soul of the Pharaoh, *The Name of Osiris*, still required assistance to successfully navigate the underworld since:

*The only certain means of traversing the Dead-land in safety was to obtain the services of some benevolent god or gods, who knew the roads, and could act therefore as trustworthy guides ...*²⁵

The underworld was, in some parts, a hot, dry desert; in other parts, it was swampy marshlands. And even though the divine guide led the deceased soul along the “right way” through the realm of the dead, the soul always had to pass through a treacherous region known as the “Sea of Reeds” or the “Field of Reeds.”

The “Sea of Reeds” was a marshy area subject to flooding, so its designation varied depending on its condition at the time the soul of the dead arrived. If the water level was low, the guide would lead the dead soul along the only way through the “Field of Reeds.”²⁶

²³ E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, p. 94.

²⁴ Budge, p. 144.

²⁵ Budge, p. 256.

²⁶ Pyramid Text 822.

But when the area was flooded, it became the “Sea of Reeds,” and the deceased soul required the services of a god who could provide a ferry or a boat for crossing.²⁷ An alternate means of passage, however, was by the “parting of the waters,” so the deceased could pass through unharmed.²⁸

As he traveled through the “Sea of Reeds,” the recently departed soul bathed in its waters, performing a ritual baptismal ceremony²⁹ to purify himself of uncleanness. While doing this, he recited:

I am the essence of a god, the son of a god, the messenger of a god; I have come that I may bathe in the Field of Rushes and that I may go down to the Field of Kenzet. The Followers of Horus cleanse me, they bathe me, they dry me, they recite for me “The Spell for Him who is on the Right Way,” they recite for me “The Spell of Him who ascends” and I ascend to the sky.³⁰

As this passage alludes, just beyond the “Sea of Reeds” lay the desired destination of the deceased—the “House of Osiris.” This “House” corresponded to the temple at the base of the pyramid in this life. But

²⁷ Pyramid Text 1188.

²⁸ J. Towers, “The Red Sea,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 18, 1959, p. 152, n. 19.

²⁹ The Apostle Paul is referring to this *parabolic image* from the Passover Parable when he says this:

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and **all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.***

(1 Corinthians 10:1–2)

³⁰ Pyramid Text 920–922.

as I stated above, the pyramid *symbolically* represented the primeval Mountain of God in the next.

So the “House of Osiris” in the realm of the dead was at the base of the cosmic Mountain of God. And only by being judged righteous could the deceased Pharaoh gain entry to the “House of Osiris.” But having gained entry, he could then climb the mountain and ascend to Heaven from the top of the Mountain of God.

The Passover Parable

The ancient Egyptian burial ritual and the Egyptian theological concepts concerning the death and resurrection of the Pharaoh combine to provide the basis for the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable that Moses conducted at God's behest.

In directing the *parabolic pantomime* of the Exodus and the wilderness wandering of the sons of Israel who came out of Egypt, God intentionally conducted much more than just a *symbolic* mimicry of the Pharaoh's burial procession. It was a mocking, taunting denial of all that pious Egyptians believed concerning the certainty of the Pharaoh's resurrection to a new life after death—and their own resurrection in him.

Focusing His wrath on the ancients' beliefs concerning resurrection, God first told Moses to publicly proclaim to the Pharaoh that Corporate Israel, not their famed god Osiris, was the "first-born" of the God Who is:

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My first-born. So I said to you, 'Let My son go, that he may serve Me;' but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.'"
(Exodus 4:22–23)

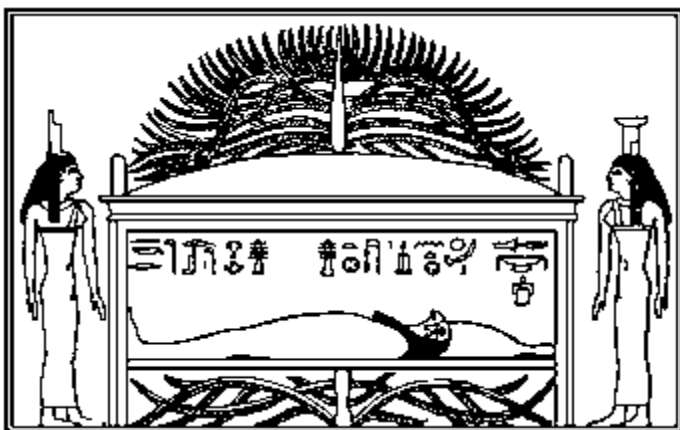
In having Moses make this declaration to the king of Egypt, God was announcing that He, not Osiris, was the Supreme Ruler of the realm beyond. That proclamation was intended as a direct challenge to the Pharaoh's divinity as Horus, son of Osiris.

But then God demonstrated through a graphic *symbolic* ritual—the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable—that “all Israel” was the Firstborn of the God Who rules over the dead. He did that by destroying all of the firstborn in Egypt except Israel.³¹ This happened at midnight, at precisely the time when the Egyptians thought the ritual killing of the firstborn took place in the realm of the dead. It is obvious that “all Israel” together is considered to be God's Firstborn since Moses sternly warns the sons of Israel that:

“None of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite {you}.”
(Exodus 12:22–23)

Why would every member of Israel have to stay inside a house when only the firstborn *males* in the land of Egypt were being killed? The youngest *female* child in a family of Israel should not have been threatened by the destroyer. She could never be a firstborn *male*. The reason she was threatened is because “all Israel” *collectively*, not *individually*, was God's Firstborn. Therefore, any member of Corporate Israel would qual-

³¹ Exodus 12:29–30.



The deceased Pharaoh is depicted as the god Osiris lying in his Funeral Coffin beside the Erica tree. The goddesses Nephthys and Isis stand at either end as the protector goddesses of coffins and canopic jars. The Erica tree represents the "flourishing" of the god Osiris in the resurrection. Different kinds of trees were planted around the pyramid complex as symbolic representation of the Pharaoh's resurrection and new life on the Mountain of God.

The resurrected king was thought to dwell on the Mountain of God in the Garden of God as the Tree of Life. (See "The Image of the King as a Tree," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991, and G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Reli-*

gion, 1951.)

The belief that the soul of the deceased came back to life in a tree was a prevalent belief throughout the ancient Near East. (See A. J. Evans, "Mycenean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901), pp. 99–203.) The soul of the deceased was thought to live in a tree planted by the tomb. Sacred groves and stone slabs (the original tombstones) were often associated with the worship of the dead. The Prophets of God condemned the sons of Israel for engaging in such idolatrous worship. Jeremiah is the most direct, condemning them:

"Who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' And to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'"
(*Jeremiah 2:27*)

ify as part of the firstborn targeted by the destroyer. It was just as Moses told Pharaoh:

*"Israel is My Son, My first-born."
(Exodus 4:22)*

After the annihilation of the firstborn proved that Israel alone was the divine Firstborn of the firstborn who qualified for resurrection, God presented Himself to the sons of Israel as the divine guide that *Corporate* Israel needed to show Him the right way through the realm of the dead.³² And just as Egyptian theology stated, by following the guidance that God provided, *Corporate* Israel soon came to the "Sea of Reeds."³³

Many students of the Bible are not aware that the original text of the Scriptures states that Israel crossed the "Sea of Reeds," not the "Red Sea." That's because the designation "Red Sea" has maintained its currency in translations since it first appeared in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Yet it could hardly have been in the original Hebrew since even the Latin *Vulgate* has the correct "Sea of Reeds" translation.

Speculation abounds as to what body of water the sons of Israel actually crossed when coming out of Egypt. It is not my purpose here to propose a definitive answer. Whatever or wherever the "Sea of Reeds" was, it was obviously one of the many sacred lakes throughout Egypt that *symbolically* represented the "Sea of Reeds" in the underworld. That is demonstrated by the fact that God tells Moses to:

³² Exodus 13:21-22.

³³ Exodus 13:18; 14:2.

"camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea."

(Exodus 14:2)

Baal-zephon can hardly be anything but a sacred area dedicated to the Canaanite god Baal, a god who, like Osiris, was believed to have died and risen again. The second part of the compound—*zephon*—is actually the name of Baal's mountain, Zaphon.³⁴ That fact indicates there was a mountain, or at least a small rise that could represent a mountain, in the vicinity of the symbolic "Sea of Reeds" that *Corporate* Israel crossed as He *parabolically* followed *The Way* through the realm of the dead. That mountain was intended to represent *symbolically* the cosmic Mountain of God belonging to the god Baal, which lay beyond the "Sea of Reeds" in the realm of the dead.

In accordance with the unique Egyptian theological tradition concerning the deceased's crossing of the "Sea of Reeds," God parted the waters so that the sons of Israel were able to pass through unharmed.³⁵ Yet God did not continue the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable at Baal-zephon, the mountain of the god Baal—the Canaanite god of the resurrection—that was associated with the sacred "Sea of Reeds" Israel had just crossed. Instead, God ignored that mountain and led the sons of Israel on to Mt. Sinai, a mountain in the desert that represented His own mountain, the cosmic Mountain of God on which the ancients believed the Canaanite god El dwelt.

³⁴ See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.

³⁵ Exodus 14.

In bypassing Baal-zephon, the mountain of Baal, God also dismissed Baal's claim to the title of "god of the resurrection." He would later, through the Prophets, make much of this initial contemptuous affront to Baal's power and ability to effect the resurrection on behalf of his worshippers. But at the time of the Exodus, it was enough to simply ignore the patron deity of the sacred "Sea of Reeds" through which He had just *parabolically* led His "People" Israel.

The Tent of El

The *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable is a powerful *parabolic* statement of God's purpose in becoming incarnate in the Person of Jesus Christ. But I have only sketched its basic outlines. In *parabolically* leading the sons of Israel out of Egypt, through the "Sea of Reeds" and on to the Mountain of God, God made one simple but powerful statement in the *symbolic* language of the religion that every Egyptian knew and understood:

"When Israel, My Firstborn Son, dies, it is He, not your Pharaoh, who will triumph over death, hell and the grave, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. After He is resurrected, My Son will declare His triumph over death by ascending from the Mountain of God to become King of Heaven."

The only part of this summarizing statement that remains to be shown is how Jesus Christ came to be *Corporate* Israel, the Firstborn Son of God. I have already explained how that is in the first volume in The Resurrection Theology Series: *Not All Israel Is Israel*.

To this point, I have dealt briefly with just a few of the *parabolic images* that God used to teach the sons of Israel who came out of Egypt about Himself and His

plan of salvation. Those *parabolic images* were taken from ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning the resurrection of the dead. But when the sons of Israel reached Mt. Sinai, God began to correct the mistaken beliefs of this religion as well as their erroneous assumptions concerning Himself as the Canaanite god El.

Through Moses, God taught the sons of Israel the requirements that must be met if they intended to enter the resurrection. He did so not just with *symbolic imagery* taken from Egyptian religion, but also with *symbolic imagery* taken from Canaanite religion. One of the most powerful of all the *parabolic images* He used was the tabernacle.

God had already identified Himself to the Patriarchs as the Canaanite god El Shaddai. But at Mt. Sinai He began to teach the sons of Israel more about Himself as the one true God, the God He revealed Himself to be through *The Name Yahweh* or *Jehovah*.³⁶

The Canaanites believed the god El lived in a tent on the Mountain of God, a tent in which the assembly of the gods met. Therefore, God told Moses to construct a tent, a tabernacle if you will, like the one he saw on the mountain:

“You must erect the tabernacle according to its design that was shown you on the mountain.”

Exodus 26:30 —my translation

It is clear that God intended the sons of Israel to

³⁶ Exodus 3:13–15.

view this tent as the equivalent of the tent of the Canaanite god El in which the assembly of the gods met. It is even called the “Tent of Meeting.” The Hebrew/Canaanite term translated “meeting” in this phrase is the same term used to describe the “meeting” of the gods in the tent on El’s mountain in the Ugaritic literature from Ras Shamra.

But the “Tent of Meeting” is only one of the many *parabolic symbols* in the Old Testament that God used to communicate His *parabolic* message to the sons of Israel. When fully understood, the *parabolic* message He communicated through Moses describes in amazing detail the Person and work of Jesus Christ—the true Israel and Firstborn Son of God. I will show you how in future volumes of The Resurrection Theology Series.

Conclusion

The sons of Israel understood the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable because it spoke in terms of the religious *symbolism* they knew and understood. They also had Moses to explain to them what God was doing.³⁷ But perhaps the most striking indication that the sons of Israel understood the *parabolic pantomime* they conducted on that first Passover can be found in Miriam's "Song of the Sea":

"Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, The place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever."
(Exodus 15:17-18)

Miriam is clearly speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* related to the Passover and Exodus from Egypt. Her song tells us that when the sons of Israel came out of Egypt, they expected to continue on to the cosmic Mountain of God where the deceased king, Corporate Israel, would be "planted" as the living Tree of Life³⁸ in accordance with the understand-

³⁷ Numbers 12:6-8.

³⁸ See "The Image of the King as a Tree," *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.

ing common to all ancient Near Eastern religions. Unfortunately for those who came out of Egypt at that time, God had other plans. For when they reached God's mountain, God told them they could not even touch the mountain, much less climb it to ascend in the resurrection.³⁹

At that time, God began to teach the sons of Israel the requirements that one must meet if one intends to enter into the resurrection from the dead. Moses told the sons of Israel that God expected them to pass along to future generations *The Teaching*, or *Torah* (the Hebrew term *torah* means "teaching"⁴⁰), they had heard.⁴¹ But they failed to do that because rebellious members of Israel went their own way and distorted *The Teaching*, teaching things that came from their own minds rather than the mind of God.⁴²

Jesus Christ restored *The Teaching of Moses* by once again revealing it to the Apostles,⁴³ telling them to *hand it down* to the next generation.⁴⁴ He even established the discipling method whereby they were to accomplish that.⁴⁵ But the Church did exactly what the sons of Israel had done. They distorted the Truth concerning God's works and His Word. Less than a century after the death of the Apostles, *The Teaching* was again lost.

³⁹ Exodus 19:10–15.

⁴⁰ See L. Harper, *The Mystery of Scripture*.

⁴¹ Deuteronomy 6:4–15.

⁴² See L. Harper, *The Way, The Truth, The Life*.

⁴³ Luke 24:45.

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:18–20.

⁴⁵ See "Where Are Jesus' Disciples?" *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.

God is now, for one last time, at work “restoring all things” concerning *The Teaching*. But He is not requiring that this generation pass it along to the next. It is much too late for that. As Jesus said, “This generation will not pass ...”⁴⁶ Those who hear the Truth now must use what they hear to save themselves. And those who have ears to hear will hear. But remember Lot’s wife.

⁴⁶ Matthew 24:34.