

Back To Basics

Volume 3

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A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles

SPECIAL ISSUE:

OBSERVING SPECIAL HOLY DAYS

Johnie Edwards

Most every religious body observes special holy days throughout the year. So, this special issue of *Back To Basics* takes a look at some of these days.

1) **WARNING ABOUT OBSERVING DAYS.** Writing the Galatians, Paul penned, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Gal. 4:10-11). These early Christians were going back to the law of Moses as they endeavored to keep certain holy days. When Christians kept these days, it caused Paul’s labor among them to be all for nought. This same warning applies to us today.

2) **TWO KINDS OF DAYS.** There are holy days and holidays. Holidays are not holy days. Some days can be observed and some cannot. We must be able to distinguish the difference. The Galatians four passage forbids observing certain special days of a religious nature. A government-appointed day, set aside to remember some person or event, is not a religious function, it is just a holiday. The days the Galatians were observing were days imposed on them when they were under the

law of Moses. Paul mentions some of these, in Colossians 2:16-17: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

3) **SOME OBSERVE THESE DAYS AS HOLY DAYS.** It is common to find both individuals and churches observing some of these days as holy days. Such is an addition to what God has commanded. King Jeroboam “ordained a feast...which he had devised of his own heart” (1 Ki. 12:32-33). Observing such a feast was said to be “sin unto the house of Jeroboam” (1 Ki. 13:34).

4) **WE ARE TO OBSERVE THINGS THE LORD HAS COMMANDED.** Jesus commissioned the apostles to teach, baptize and then said, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Mt. 28:19-20). It seems that a lot of folks have not learned that the New Testament must regulate what we are to observe in a spiritual way. This special issue of *Back To Basics* is designed to make us aware of days we are not to count as holy days and to learn what we are to observe.

NAME	PASSOVER	PENTECOST	TRUMPETS	TABERNACLES	DEDICATION	PURIM
SCRIPTURE REFERENCES	Ex. 12:1-28 Lev. 23:5-8 Dt. 16:1-8 Num. 28:16-25	Lev. 23:9-21 Dt. 16:9-12 Num. 28:16-31	Lev. 23:23-25 Num. 29:1-6	Lev. 23:34-44 Num. 29:12-38	Jn. 10:22	Est. 9:26-32
TIME OF OBSERVANCE	14th Nisan or Abid	6th Sivan	1st Tisri, Ethaniam	15th Tisri, Ethaniam	25th Chislev	14th - 15th Adar
ENGLISH MONTH (APPROX.)	April	June	October	October	December	March
DURATION	7 days	1 day	1 day	7 days	8 days	2 days
WHERE OBSERVED	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	Throughout the land	Jerusalem	Anywhere	Anywhere
MAIN FEATURE OF ITS OBSERVANCE	Eating passover lamb	Offering of two loaves	Blowing of trumpets	Dwelling in booths	Mirth and Gladness	Reading book of Esther
WHAT IT COMMEMORATED	Deliverance of Israel from Egypt	Giving of the law from Mt. Sinai	Beginning of the new year	Life in the Wilderness	Temple-cleansing and altar-rebuilding	Esther's deliverance of the plot

Thank You

The publishers of *Back To Basics* would like to thank our 2005 readers for making this a good year for the journal. We hope this has been a good year for you and wish for you a better year to come. We have enjoyed coming into your home each month, via this journal, and pray that it has been beneficial to you. If you like the journal, please tell others about it. Better still, subscribe for a friend.

Back To Basics

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JUDGING AND THE OBSERVANCE OF DAYS

John Isaac Edwards

Brethren have long been disturbed over judging and the observance of days. Soon after the church was established, we find early Christians judging one another with respect of days. We would do well to observe what the Lord had to say about such.

1) LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND. As Paul wrote concerning matters of indifference to God, he said, “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5). Whether one esteems “one day above another” or regards “every day alike” is a matter of individual determination. *The observance of days is an issue that must be settled within one’s own conscience!* (Rom. 14:22-23).

2) DO NOT JUDGE YOUR BROTHER. Two groups of people are discussed in Romans 14: the *weak* (v. 1) and the *strong* (Rom. 15:1). This difference in conscience is seen in the eating of meats, for example: “For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs” (Rom. 14:2). In addition to the eating of meats, the weak and the strong were setting each other at nought over the observance of days. Paul asked, “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?” (Rom. 14:4) and “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?” (Rom. 14:10). The two parties were admonished, “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Rom. 14:13). This will cause brethren of differing conscience to receive one another (Rom. 15:7).

3) LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU. Paul instructed the Colossian Christians, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days” (Col. 2:16). These Old Testament “holy days” ceased to be of any religious significance, when the law which imposed their observance passed away. Colossians 2:14 says, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

When it comes to the observance of days, judge not and be not judged.

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PASSOVER, PENTECOST, & TABERNACLES

Donnie V. Rader

For the Jews, there were three great yearly feasts. Here we give attention to the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

1) **PASSOVER.** The Passover was also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

☒ *Passages:* Exodus 12:21-27; 23:18; 34:25; Leviticus 23:5-14; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Ezekiel 45:21-24.

☒ *When it was observed:* On the 14th day of Abid (Nisan), which corresponds to our April.

☒ *What it observed:* The deliverance of the Israelites when the firstborn of the Egyptians was slain. If blood was sprinkled on the door, God would “pass over” them.

☒ *How it was observed:* A lamb was to be slain and the blood sprinkled on the lintel and door post of the houses. “With the Passover meal, and during seven days, no unleavened bread was to be eaten. None of the flesh was to be left till morning. After the meal, the worshippers were to go to their homes; the seventh day was to be a solemn assembly, and this period was treated as opening the seven weeks’ ‘joy of harvest,’ commencing from Abib, when the corn would be coming into ear” (*Hastings*).

2) **PENTECOST.** The Feast of Pentecost was also called the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Harvest, and the Day of First-fruits.

☒ *Passages:* Exodus 34:22; 23:16; Deuteronomy 16:10; Numbers 28:26.

☒ *When it was observed:* “It was calculated, according to Deuteronomy 16:9, seven weeks after the sickle had been put to the standing grain. In the priestly law, it was

calculated seven weeks or fifty days after the Sabbath that followed Passover (Lev. 23:15)” (*Hastings*).

☒ *What it observed:* “It marked the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest” (*Hastings*).

☒ *How it was observed:* “... there was to be a holy convocation, on which no manner of work was to be done; ...The sacrifices offered were (1) the morning and evening sacrifices, with their grain and drink offerings; (2) a burnt offering, consisting of seven lambs, one young bull, two rams, with their grain and drink offering... (3) the two wave loaves, the new grain offering, of two-tenths of an ephah of new flour... and (4) with the loaves, a kid of the goats for a sin offering and two lambs for a peace offering...” (*The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*).

3) **TABERNACLES.** The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the Feast of Ingatherings.

☒ *Passages:* Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:34-36, 39-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15; 31:10-13; Nehemiah 8.

☒ *When it was observed:* It began on the 15th day of Tishri (Sept. - Oct.) and lasted for eight days.

☒ *What it observed:* It commemorated their escape from Egypt and wanderings in the wilderness.

☒ *How it was observed:* The people dwelled in booths. A number of offerings were offered.

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THE SABBATH DAY

Johnie Edwards

The Sabbath day belongs to the past. Thus, Sabbath-keeping is not binding on anyone today.

1) **THE SABBATH MADE KNOWN.** For the first 2500 years of man's history, there was no command to keep the Sabbath, no example of it being kept and no penalty for breaking it. Now, exactly when was the Sabbath made known? Sabbath-keeping was not commanded until the ten commandments were given. Read it: "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and speakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments. And *madest known* unto them thy *holy sabbath*, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant" (Neh. 9:13-14). John stated that "the law was given by Moses..." (Jn. 1:17). The command to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: (Ex. 20:8), was part of the law given at Sinai; not before!

2) **TO WHOM WAS THE SABBATH GIVEN?** Sabbath-keeping was given to those who had been in Egyptian bondage. "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage...Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:1-2, 8). Moses penned that it was a sign between God and Israel. Look at it: "The sabbath is a sign between *me and the children of Israel* forever...throughout their generations" (Ex. 31:12-17). Ezekiel put it this way: "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them" (Ezek. 20:12). There is no doubt about it, God gave

sabbath-keeping to His people, Israel, during the law of Moses. Even though the Sabbath was made for man (Mk. 2:27), we must ask: which man?

3) **PURPOSE OF THE SABBATH.** An understanding of the purpose of the sabbath day will help us in understanding where it belongs. The fifth book of Moses says: "And remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: *therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day*" (Deut. 5:15). Those today claiming to keep the Sabbath were never in Egyptian bondage and brought out. Only Israel of old was!

4) **SABBATH OBSERVANCE NAILED TO THE CROSS.** Paul penned, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). Then it is said: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the *sabbath days*" (Col. 2:16). No man has the right to bind a day that God has loosed!

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THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

John Isaac Edwards

The book of atonement, Leviticus, sets forth the day of atonement (Lev. 16). The annual day of atonement was an important holy day for Old Testament Israel.

1) **WHAT IS ATONEMENT?** *Atonement* may be defined as to cover over, to pacify, to propitiate, to purge, to make reconciliation. One of the finest illustrations of atonement is Jacob's attempt to appease Esau in Genesis 32. Jacob said, "I will *appease* him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will *accept* of me" (Gen. 32:20). To atone, therefore, is to appease for acceptance.

2) **WHY WAS ATONEMENT MADE?** Sin created the need for atonement. Anytime Israel sinned against God, atonement had to be made - just read Exodus 32; Numbers 16 & 25; and 2 Chronicles 29. The purpose of atonement is also realized from a reading of Exodus 29:33-37. Atonement was designed "to consecrate and to sanctify" (Ex. 29:33), to "cleanse" (Ex. 29:36), and to make "holy" (Ex. 29:37). Thus, atonement has to do with the process by which one is set apart for a sacred purpose, cleansed and made holy.

3) **HOW WAS ATONEMENT MADE?** In Old Testament times, atonement was made by offering an animal sacrifice. Leviticus 16:6 says, "And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house."

4) **WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ATONEMENT AND BLOOD?** There can be no atonement for the soul apart from blood. Leviticus

17:11 records, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). This is why, on the annual day of atonement, the high priest went into the most holy place "not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:7). Hebrews 9:22 asserts, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

5) **DO WE KEEP THE DAY OF ATONEMENT TODAY?** The day of atonement ceased the day Christ died (Heb. 9:15-17). God sent forth His Son to be "the propitiation for our sins" (Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). In fact, the book of Hebrews contrasts Old Testament atonement sacrifices with the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9 & 10). "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11-12). The annual day of atonement was an annual day of remembrance. "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:3-4).

We appeal to you by the better blood of the better covenant to be baptized into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), where you contact the sin and soul-atonement blood of Christ (Jn. 19:33-34), that you may be sanctified, cleansed and made holy. Let today be the day of atonement!

THE CHRISTIAN AND EASTER

Stan Adams

The word translated “Easter” in Acts 12:4 should be translated “Passover.” It is unfortunate that the King James translators overlooked this error. It has given rise to much confusion with some. There is no evidence in the New Testament that any religious celebration of “Easter” was observed. The origin of the modern religious celebration has its roots in paganism.

1) **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE OF DAYS.** The only day that Christians are to observe with any religious significance is the one commanded by God in Acts 20:7. We are to remember weekly the death of our dear Savior on the cross. It is a special day and one that we are to hold as holy. God wants all of His children to observe Sunday (the first day of every week), as His special day. We come together to worship God and to honor the death of our Savior and Lord, Jesus. We do not celebrate with religious fervor, any other day.

2) **SECULAR OBSERVANCE OF EASTER OR OTHER DAYS.** It is clear that we have seasons of the year. It is not unscriptural for us to realize that these seasons exist, to buy one another new clothes for these various seasons, as long as they are modest, or for Christians to keep birthdays and other days that have special meaning to them. Romans 14:5-6 says, “one man esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards a day regards it before God, and he that regards not a day, to the Lord he does not regard it.” It is clear that some Christians in the first century kept some days as special. Others did not. There was no breach of fellowship on this matter. Each answered to God as to how he kept a day.

3) **SECULAR OBSERVANCE OF EASTER.** The religious world places great stock in a day they call *Easter*. They celebrate it with fervor and hold it more special than any other Sunday. This is erroneous. The Christian has no right or authority to participate in such religious observance of that day. There is however, no violation of God’s law when one chooses to observe such a day in a secular manner. He may buy his kids, wife and himself new clothes, just as he may do any time of year. He may give his kids candy and some stuffed animals, if he so chooses on this day or any other. He may also engage in some pretend games with his kids, just as he may do when playing with them daily. All of these things do not violate any Scripture. He is to be vocal and firm in standing against any religious observance of Easter or any other day. He can, however, keep such a day “to himself” by the authority of Romans 14:5-6. It is a personal thing and he cannot bind his secular observance on others as a matter of faith. The man who chooses to totally abstain from any celebration of Easter is also within his rights from Romans 14:5-6. Each must respect the scruple of the other on such matters and not be divisive and draw lines of fellowship with his brethren on such things. Let no one divide over such things as these. Let us observe Romans 14:18-20 on these matters and not destroy one another over the keeping of days. Let us abstain from any religious observance of Easter and be tolerant of one another in any secular observance (or lack of observance) that others may choose. Our first century brethren did not divide over these things and neither should we.

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OBSERVING CHRISTMAS AS A HOLY DAY

Johnie Edwards

“Let’s put Christ back in Christmas” is the theme of many, come the month of December. It would be just as fitting to say, “Let’s put Christ back in July 4th!” He cannot be put back in such, as He was never in them. We take a look at observing Christmas as a religious holy day.

1) **ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS.** The observance of Christmas as a holy day is not of Biblical origin. Most look upon this day as the birthday of Jesus. The Bible does not give the day of His birth, year or month! The birthday of Christ has been fixed at each month of the year by different men. It has its origin in paganism and Catholicism.

2) **CHRISTMAS NOT OBSERVED BY THE FIRST CHURCH.** Read all you please - you will not find the New Testament church observing the birth of our Lord. Had God wanted us to observe the birth of His Son, He would have told us when and how to do so. Since He did not, we must respect the silence of such teaching. The apostles informed the church what to observe; “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Mt. 28:20). They were instructed to eat the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), along with laying by in store on that same day (1 Cor. 16:1-2). *The Encyclopedia Britannica* states, “Christmas was not among the earliest festival of the church, and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether on January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th” (Vol. 5, p. 641).

3) **THE DEATH OF CHRIST.** It is the death of Christ, not His birth, that is to be remembered.

Writing the Corinthians, Paul stated the request of Christ, in regards to the Lord’s supper, in these words, “...this do in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:25-26). Wonder why His birth was not mentioned? The death of Christ is remembered every week, on the first day (Acts 20:7), as the communion is observed.

4) **SOME CHURCHES OF CHRIST.** A church bulletin, from an area church, crossed my desk, last December, that was shocking, to say the least. The bulletin stated that December 25th was the birthday of Jesus. They were having Christmas parties in their fellowship hall. The meeting house was decorated for Christmas and the list went on. Can you imagine that those claiming to be the Lord’s church could get so far from Bible teaching as this? We are going to have to get back to teaching the basics on such things as the silence of the Scriptures, respect for Bible authority, “for what saith the scripture?” (Rom. 4:3), “speaking as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), and the like.

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THE LORD'S DAY

Johnie Edwards

God has set aside a day for man to observe in a spiritual way - the Lord's day. John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). This can only have reference to the first day of the week. Thus, the Lord's day is a special holy day! It is on this day that:

1) **JESUS RESURRECTED.** Reading the divine record, we learn, "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre at the rising of the sun..." where it was said, "he is risen; he is not here. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week..." (Mk. 16:2-9). We are taught to observe this day.

2) **THE LORD'S CHURCH BEGAN.** The Lord's church had its beginning on "the day of Pentecost" in Acts 2. Leviticus 23:15-16 teaches us that Pentecost always came on the first day of the week. Read it. This is one of the marks of identity of the New Testament church. For a church to have begun at any other time, it cannot be the Lord's!

3) **THE LORD'S SUPPER WAS OBSERVED.** New Testament Christians found themselves eating the Lord's supper on the Lord's day. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..." (Acts 20:7). Paul even waited in Troas "seven days" that he might be present on the Lord's day! (Acts 20:6). A failure to observe the Lord's supper each first day of the week is a failure to do as the Lord has stated.

4) **LAYING BY IN STORE TOOK PLACE.** Paul gave this divine order for the church: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay

by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This giving, along with the communion, is to be observed on the first day of every week, and only on the first day of the week!

5) WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LORD'S DAY?

Men seem to place more emphasis on human days and world events than they do on the Lord's day. Churches "highlight homecoming, open house, Mother's, Father's, Chili cook off" and the like -day. Individuals think of the Lord's day as "my day off, football day, take-it-easy day, day to sleep in, or a day to visit friends and family." As a result of this attitude, parents have taught their children that the Lord's day is really not that important, if there are other things you had rather do. So, we have grown a generation of folks who could care less about what the Bible teaches concerning the Lord's day. We must get back to the basics of teaching our young people about putting first things first (Mt. 6:33).

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Kid's Activity Page

Paul Adams

Memory Verse: *"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:10-11).*

Observing Special Days

Many denominations observe special "holy days" that are not found in the Bible. Unscramble the words below to reveal some of these days that the Lord's church does not observe.

S T A H R C I M S

G O D O Y A D F I R

T E E R S A

Unscramble the words below to show the one day every week that the Lord's church observes. It is the first day of the week, or this in Revelation 1:10:

H E T S L R O D Y A D

***"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).***

Question: *“I have always thought Christians should not do anything at Christmas time or Easter. Any comments about this?”*

Answer:

We know for certainty that the Lord’s people cannot celebrate “Christmas” as the birthday of Jesus, since we do not know when He was born. Nor can we celebrate the resurrection of Christ just on “Easter Sunday,” because this is to be done weekly. “Christmas” is a national holiday. Some things are not wrong within themselves. While at the same time, we must see to it that “Christmas parties” and other festivities do not take priority over serving God as we travel to attend family gatherings. Often, giving on the first day of the week is less than normal because too much is spent on gifts and merriment. We can allow December-demands to outweigh our responsibilities to the Lord, if we are not careful. The church must always be put “first” (Mt. 6:33), even at “Christmas time.” A lot of sinful practices are associated with “Christmas.” This time of the year is used by many to drink and carouse around. Many parties held during the “Christmas season” are for sinful purposes. Immorality is wrong at any time of the year, and “Christmas” is no excuse for engaging in such (Gal. 5:19-21; Ti. 2:12). Since “Christmas” is a holiday, Christians can observe holidays as customs dictate so long as they do not contradict the Bible. One can send greetings, give gifts, and the like without doing so to religiously honor December 25th as the birthday of Christ. Observing “Christmas” as a holiday is no more wrong than any other civil holiday, as long as we do not attach religious significance to it. A thing can be right in and of itself, but can become wrong when it takes on a spiritual use. For an example, “washing of hands, cups, pots, vessels and tables” is fine to do, but it becomes sin when we attach religious use to it (Mk. 7:1-9). The attitude expressed at the “Christmas season” is not all bad; that of giving, greeting one another and being together.

It has been asked, “what about wearing new clothes on Easter Sunday?” Folks who attend church services only at “Easter,” with or without new clothes is not acceptable. The Lord’s people are taught, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...” (Heb. 10:25). The Lord’s church does nothing any different on “Easter Sunday” than they did the Sunday before or after! Every Lord’s day is to be treated alike. And it is no more wrong to wear new clothes on “Easter Sunday” than any other Sunday. But, if wearing new clothes makes you uncomfortable, wear old clothes!

Have A Bible Question? Send to: Back To Basics, P.O. Box 251, Ellettsville, IN 47429

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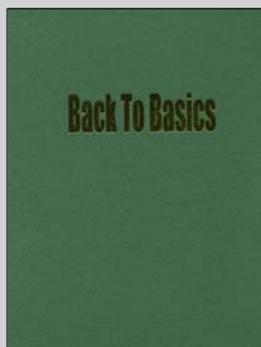
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