

Just Follow God's Ordained Order!

Order means “to arrange according to a particular plan” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Some synonyms are: arrange, array, codify, draw up, organize, and some antonyms are: disarrange, disarray, and disorder.

Everything in God's plan follows a **logical** order that did not change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is a blueprint and the New Covenant is the building project. “Ye also, as living stones, are *being* built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Peter 2:5).

God's plan does not keep changing. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is **no variableness, neither shadow of turning**” (James 1:17). Unlike man, who is as unstable as water, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Passover is the most important of all of God's commanded assemblies. If the Israelites had not kept Passover at the time that God commanded, they would not have been released from the bondage of Egypt (sin). The timing of Passover has not changed from the Old Testament to the New.

However, there remains a controversy over whether Passover should be observed on the fourteenth or the fifteenth day of the first month. **The primary problem here is not paying attention to, and following, the simple instructions that follow a logical order.**

Under the Old Covenant, the Passover sacrifices were killed, prepared, and then eaten. Under the authority of the churches of God, the symbols of unleavened bread and wine, representing the death of “Christ our Passover,” are taken about twenty hours before His death. Did God, who does not change, change the order of Passover from the logical sequence of killing, preparing, and eating the Passover, to observing the Passover ceremony in a time frame that is almost a full day prior to the death of the Passover? Or is it men who have changed the correct order of Passover?

“These *are* the feasts [4150, *appointed times*] of the LORD, *even* holy [6944, *consecrated, set apart*] convocations [4744, *to summon to an assembly*], which ye shall proclaim in their seasons [4150]” (Leviticus 23:4). God has set the times that His holy convocations are to be observed. There are **seven** annual holy commanded assemblies listed in Leviticus twenty-three, and the number seven means that something is finished it has been completed.

“And on the **seventh** day God **ended** His work which He had made; and He rested [7673, *to desist, cease, come to an end*] **on the seventh day** from all his work which he had made”

(Genesis 2:2). Nothing can be added to or subtracted from the seven days of creation without causing some degree of disorder. Likewise, the seven annual holy convocations follow the creative process of creating man into the image of God that cannot be added to or subtracted from without causing confusion in the process.

“In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even [lit. *between the evenings*] is the LORD’S Passover” (v. 5). The phrase “between the evenings” is often mistranslated as “twilight.” We will have more on that later.

Verse 5 has been used as a “proof” text that Passover is to be observed at the beginning of the fourteenth day. However, there **isn’t a holy convocation on the fourteenth day**. Since Passover is a commanded assembly to worship before God, then why is there not a holy convocation on the fourteenth? Instead of making assumptions, maybe we should look at what actually took place on the fourteenth day “between the evenings.”

“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel **shall kill it in the evening** [lit. *between the evenings*]” (Exodus 12:5, 6).

The killing of the Passover sacrifices is not the Passover ceremony! All of the preparations of killing, bleeding out, skinning, cleaning, and roasting the lamb whole would have taken several hours. “Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with* fire; his head with his legs, and with the entrails thereof” (Exodus 12:9). Just thoroughly roasting a whole lamb would take several hours by itself.

After the lambs were dead the Israelites were to “...take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, **wherein they shall eat it**” (v. 7).

The blood had to be placed around the doors of their dwellings **before they ate the Passover** because it was their protection from death. “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: **and when I see the blood, I will pass over you**, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt” (v.13).

God’s ordained order is that the shedding of blood must precede the Passover ceremony. Jesus said, “I am the **door**: by Me if any enter in, he **shall be saved** [4982, *to preserve safe and unharmed, set free from*]...” (John 10:9). After Jesus was dead, “...one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came there out **blood** and water” (John 19:34).

Jesus fulfilled the bloody door of the Passover of Exodus twelve. The people had to enter through the bloody door of their dwellings to eat the Passover. Passing through the door represented Jesus’ shed blood covering our sins. **Without the shed blood of the Passover**

sacrifice there really wouldn't be any point to the Passover ceremony, for "...without shedding of blood is no remission [859, *deliverance from captivity, pardon, forgiveness*]" (Hebrews 9:22).

The simple truth is this: the Passover ceremony was never held prior to the death and preparation of the sacrifice because that is a complete impossibility. Any "Passover observance" that is held before the death of the Passover sacrifice is not Passover. You can call it Passover, but it isn't really Passover. You can call a pig a cow, but the fact remains it is still a pig.

The Passover ceremony could not begin until all of the preparations were completed. "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire and **unleavened bread**; and with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it" (Exodus 12:8).

Now we add another key component of the Passover ceremony. Unleavened bread was to be eaten with the Passover sacrifice. On what days did God command unleavened bread to be eaten?

"And on the **fifteenth day** of the same month *is the feast of unleavened bread* unto the LORD: **seven days** ye must eat unleavened bread. **On the first day you shall have a holy convocation**: you shall do no customary work on it...in the seventh day *is an holy convocation*: ye shall do no servile work *therein*." (Leviticus 23:4-7).

Once again we have the number seven, which represents completeness. Unleavened bread was specifically commanded to be eaten for seven days. The number seven also represents sanctification. "And God blessed the seventh day, and **sanctified** [6942, *consecrate, set apart for holy use, make clean*] it: because that in it He had rested [7673, *cease, desist, rest*] from all His work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:3).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a sanctification festival, i.e., it pictures the complete removal of sin through blood and water. Israel was released from the bondage of Egypt (sin) by the blood of the Passover sacrifice, and by the crossing of the Red Sea which represented baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2).

The spear that pierced Jesus' side brought forth both blood and water. "...**Repent** [*blood*], and **be baptized** [*water*]...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [859, *deliverance from captivity, forgiveness, pardon*] of sin..." (Acts 2:38). The seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the complete removal of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ and baptism.

The first day of unleavened bread, a holy convocation is on the fifteenth. There is no holy convocation on the fourteenth, nor is there a command to eat unleavened bread on the fourteenth. Which of these two days best meets the requirements of the Passover ceremony, which is a

commanded assembly, and which requires unleavened bread as a part of the ceremony? Obviously the fifteenth meets the requirements but the fourteenth does not.

A part of the problem that confuses many is the meaning of the phrase “between the evenings,” which is translated in most Bibles as “twilight.” The Hebrew word that is most often used for twilight is *Strong’s* #5399, nesheph. It appears twelve times in the O.T. and it is used for both morning and evening twilight. If twilight is what was intended then it would seem that nesheph would have been used.

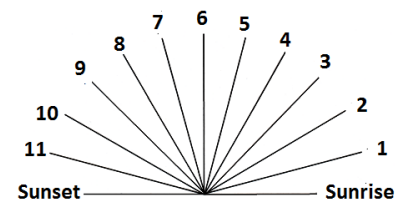
Twilight is a variable length of time from sunset until dark. Its length depends on latitude, season of the year and weather conditions. As we shall see, the phrase “between the evenings” **is used for a specific time of day—not for a variable time such as twilight.** In order to understand the meaning of the phrase “between the evenings,” we need to see how it is actually used.

The incense offering was offered on the altar of incense twice each day. “And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense **every morning**: when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lights the lamps **at even** [lit. *between the evenings*], he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations” (Exodus 30:7, 8).

The incense offering represented the prayers of the saints. “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand” (Revelation 8:3, 4).

The times of the incense offerings were known as the hours of prayer. “Now when Peter and John went together into the temple **at the hour of prayer**, being the **ninth** hour” (Acts 3:1).

The ninth hour is the midpoint between solar noon (6th hour) and sunset (see diagram). It corresponds to about 3:00 P.M. The ninth hour corresponds to the second incense offering of the day, which took place “between the evenings.” The two evenings are noon and sunset, not sunset and dark.



“Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goes away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out” (Jeremiah 6:4). The shadows begin to lengthen when the sun crosses its zenith at noon—the first evening—and the shadows cease at sunset—the second evening. The mid-point between the solar noon and sunset is called “between the evenings.” It is a specific time of day. It is not a variable time, as is twilight.

“Christ our Passover” (1 Corinthians 5:7) died at the ninth hour (Matthew 27:46-50; Mark 15:33-41; Luke 23:44-49). The ninth hour corresponds to the killing of the Passover sacrifices “between the evenings” in the Old Covenant. Jesus’ death at the ninth hour fulfilled the timing of the Passover sacrifices perfectly, which is what you would expect. God’s timing is perfect.

The Passover sacrifices of Exodus twelve took place at midafternoon, three hours before sunset. The sacrifices could not have been killed, bled out, skinned, cleaned, and roasted whole before the night of the 15th of Abib. “And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and **unleavened bread**; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Exodus 12:8). Thus the Passover observance is on the first day of unleavened bread—a holy convocation.

The proponents of a fourteenth Passover claim that Jesus observed the Passover at the beginning of the fourteenth, and that is when we should observe it today. Was Jesus’ last meal a Passover meal?

Moses gave God’s instructions for the Passover observance to the people **prior to it being observed**, which would be a logical thing to do. Likewise, on the night before His crucifixion Jesus gave instructions for observing the New Testament Passover after His death.

“...[T]he Lord Jesus **the same night in which he was betrayed** took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: **this is my body, which is broken for you**: this do in remembrance [364, *bring to mind, recall, a memorial*] of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood**: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, 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 Corinthians 11:23-26).

At this meal Jesus had not yet fulfilled the Passover sacrifice. His body had not been broken, nor had His blood been shed, and He had not died. That was not a Passover meal, as the scripture says, “Now before [4253, *prior to, ahead of*] the feast of the Passover...And supper being ended [or, during supper]...” (John 13:1).

At that meal Jesus said “...unto them, With desire [1939, *a longing for what is forbidden*] I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not eat it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15).

Strong’s #1939 is used 38 times and it is always refers to that which is forbidden. How could Jesus have been forbidden to eat the Passover meal, if that was the Passover meal that He was eating at that time? He could not eat the Passover meal that year because He was going to be dead and buried before the Passover meal. He was the Passover sacrifice that year.

Jesus’ sacrifice took away the sacrificial system forever, for He “...offered one sacrifice for sins forever...” (Hebrews 10:12). But He never changed the order of events. The Word of God never

changes. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Be not carried about with diverse and strange [3581, *alien, novel*] doctrines...” (Hebrews 13:8, 9).

The New Testament Passover follows the same logical pattern as the Old Testament Passover. First the Passover must be sacrificed, and then the feast. “...For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but **with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth**” (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8).

Christ’s death brought in the New Covenant. “For where a testament *is*, **there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead:** otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives” (Hebrews 9:16, 17).

The timing of the crucifixion was vitally important. “And it was the **third hour**, and they crucified Him” (Mark 15:25). As previously noted, His death occurred at the **ninth hour**. The two hours multiplied together equal **twenty-seven**. There are **twenty-seven** books that make up the new covenant. Three and nine are the only two whole numbers that can be evenly divided into **twenty-seven**. On the **twenty-seventh** of Iyar (second month) Jesus, “...by His own blood He entered in once into the Most Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us....and for this cause He is the mediator of the new covenant..” (Hebrews 9:12, 15).

God’s timing is perfect. The timing of the Passover sacrifices did not change from the Old to the New Covenant, nor did the timing of the Passover observance. Passover is a holy convocation that is to be observed with unleavened bread on the fifteenth of Abib, the first of God’s seven annual holy convocations. The fourteenth of Abib is a preparation day for the holy convocation that is on the fifteenth.

By following the logical order of God’s instructions we are led to a logical conclusion. If we prefer to follow the illogical teachings of men, then we end up with disorder, disarray, and confusion.

Thankfully, “...God is not the author of confusion [181, *instability, disorder, commotion, tumult*], but of peace [1515, *eirénē* (from *eirō*, "to join, tie together into a whole") – properly, *wholeness*, i.e. when all essential parts are joined together; *peace* (God's gift of *wholeness*)).¹

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