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The New Testament Passover

In spite of all of the problems of a fourteenth Passover, it has been said, “Jesus kept the Passover on the fourteenth in the New Testament and that is when we are to keep it today.” This is a classic example of circular reasoning, because the time for observing Passover was established in the Old Testament long before the New Testament even existed.

We have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the Passover sacrifices were performed between noon and sunset, which is about 3:00 PM, and that “Christ our Passover” died at the same time of day, which eliminates any possibility of a fourteenth Passover. The blueprint for Passover is in the Old Testament. The New Testament is the fulfillment of that which God has revealed in the Old Testament.

The early New Testament congregations did not have the New Testament. They only had the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament wasn't canonized until the fourth century A.D., some 300 years after the beginning of the New Testament congregations. The Bereans “... received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched [350, *to be inquisitive, scrutinize*] the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). If the Bereans, or any of the early New Testament congregations, were going to prove the timing of Passover, **they had to confirm it from the Old Testament, which were the only scriptures available!**

We are going to demonstrate that Jesus never once kept Passover on the fourteenth, because there is no such thing as a fourteenth Passover. We will also show the pagan origin of the fourteenth Passover, and how it came to be observed in the churches.

Jesus' First Passover

The first recorded Passover of Jesus was when He was twelve years old. “Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom [1485, *usage prescribed by law*] of the feast” (Luke 2:41, 42). Jesus' parents were following the instructions that were given in the Old Covenant.

We need to remember that the New Covenant was not in force until after the death of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost. “For a testament is of force [949, *established*] **after men are dead**: otherwise it is of no strength [2480, *to have power*] at all while the testator lives” (Hebrews 9:17).

Jesus' parents were Jews, and it is well established that the Jews in Jesus' day observed the Passover on the fifteenth, just as prescribed by the law of the Eternal in the O.T. Jesus' parents had traveled to Jerusalem with a large contingent of Jews that included relatives and acquaintances (v. 44). There is absolutely no indication that Jesus, or His parents, observed the Passover on any day other than the fifteenth, which was the date established by the Law.

The priests in Jesus day began the Passover sacrifices at the ninth hour, just as it was prescribed by the law. "...So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh..."¹ It was required by the law that the sacrifices be made at the temple in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:6, 7).

The Tenth Day

These Passover sacrifices were to be taken up on the tenth day of the first month (Exodus 12:3). The purpose was so the lambs could be inspected daily to make sure that no blemish showed up, because "your lamb shall be without blemish ..." (v. 5). So on the tenth day of the month the sacrificial lambs were herded into Jerusalem, and were inspected daily to make sure they were blemish free.

Jesus fulfilled this perfectly when He entered Jerusalem on the tenth day of the first month as the Passover sacrifice. "Then Jesus six days before Passover came to Bethany ..." (John 12:1). Counting back six days from the fifteenth takes us back to the ninth day of the month (14th, 13th, 12th, 11th, 10th, 9th). Jesus was crucified on Wednesday the fourteenth; therefore the ninth was on Friday.

"On the **next day** much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord" (vv. 12, 13). The next day was the Sabbath, the tenth. As the Lamb of God, Jesus fulfilled the timing of the taking up of the Passover lambs on the tenth day perfectly. If you were to count back from the fourteenth, you would have Jesus, as the Passover Lamb, entering Jerusalem on the ninth day, which does not fulfill Exodus 12:3.

The Jewish leaders "inspected" Jesus daily in an attempt to find some defect in Him, which they were unable to legitimately do. On the morning of the fourteenth, Jesus was in the custody of Pilate, who, through the inspiration of the Father, declared, "... **I find no fault in Him**" (John 19:4). The Father was the only One who could declare that His Son was faultless. Jesus Christ qualified as "... a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:19, 20).

After the lamb was approved as being blemish free, then, "... on the fourteenth day of the same month ... the whole assembly of the children of Israel shall kill it in the evening [lit. *between the evenings*]" (Exodus 12:6). This corresponded to the death of Jesus Christ at the 9th hour, or about 3:00 P.M. Jesus Christ fulfilled the tenth day and the fourteenth day perfectly, just as the Father had ordained it to be.

The Evening of the Fourteenth

"And the first day of unleavened bread, **when they killed the Passover**, His disciples said to Him, Where will you that we go and prepare that you may eat the Passover?" (Mark

¹ William Whiston, A.M., translator, *Josephus Complete Works*, Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 1974, p. 588.

14:12). This is not the fifteenth, which would be the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but it is the fourteenth. The sacrifices were performed at the temple on the afternoon of the fourteenth.

On the evening of the fourteenth, about 18-20 hours prior to the killing of the sacrifices, the disciples were asking a logical question about where they were going to eat the Passover. At the Passover season, Jerusalem filled up with pilgrims. If the disciples had waited until the night of the Passover observance, it would have been too late to find a place to eat it. The fact that they had asked on the evening of the fourteenth, about twenty-four hours before the Passover ceremony was held, tells us that the Passover meal was not being held that night.

Jesus told His disciples to go to a certain place, “And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover” (Mk. 14:16). Does that mean that they went and got a lamb, sacrificed it, and roasted it according to the ordinance? It would be easy to jump to conclusions here, and make the assumption that they were killing and preparing the Passover.

What does the law say? “You may **not** sacrifice the Passover **within any of your gates** ... But **at the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place His name in, there you shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that you came forth out of Egypt**” (Deuteronomy 16:5, 6). The going down of the sun has the same meaning as “between the evenings.” The sun begins its descent at noon, and sets at sunset. The fact that it is going down indicates that it has not gone down.

Where did the Eternal place His name? In Solomon’s prayer, at the dedication of the temple, he prayed, “That Your eyes shall be open toward this house [*the temple*] night and day, even toward the place of which You have said, **My name shall be there** ...” (1 Kings 8:29). Wherever the tabernacle/temple was located is where the Eternal placed His name.

The sacrifices had to be performed at the temple by the priests and Levites. “Moreover Josiah kept a Passover **to the LORD in Jerusalem:** and they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month” (2 Chronicles 35:1). They would have begun killing the Passover sacrifices “between the evenings,” according to the law. “And they killed the Passover, and the priests sprinkled the blood from their hands, and the Levites flayed them...And they roasted the Passover with fire according to the ordinance ... And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests...were busied in offering of burnt offerings and the fat until **night**...And the children of Israel that were present kept the Passover **at that time**, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days” (vv. 11, 13, 14, 17).

Some claim that the Passover sacrifices were not to be done at the temple, because in Egypt the people had killed their own lambs, and that later the Jews errantly took it upon themselves to perform the Passover sacrifices at the temple. When Israel was in bondage in Egypt they did not have a tabernacle or temple; therefore it was impossible to do it at a place that did not then exist. Also, the Eternal had not yet established the Levitical priesthood; therefore the priests, that did not yet exist, could not perform the sacrifices. The sacrifices in Egypt were performed by the heads of the families.

What does the Word of God say about Josiah's Passover? Did He condemn them for performing the sacrifices at the temple? “And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the

inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this Passover kept” (vv. 18-19). It sounds like Josiah was being praised for this Passover.

The tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year after their exodus from Egypt (Ex. 40:2). From that time forward they were required to bring their sacrifices to the tabernacle, and later to the temple. “... Whatsoever man...that offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and brings it **not** unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to offer it to the LORD; **even that man shall be cut off from among his people**” (Lev. 17:8, 9). Why? “And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, **after whom they have gone a whoring**. This shall be a statute **forever**...throughout their generations” (v. 7). They were required to bring all offerings and sacrifices to the tabernacle, to keep the people from building their high places and committing idolatry.

If a person was “...in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover to the LORD. The fourteenth day of the **second month** at even [lit. *between the evenings*] they shall keep [6213, *prepare*] it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs” (Numbers 9:10, 11). If they were traveling, and unable to get back in time to where the tabernacle was located, they had to wait until the second month to observe Passover. If the Passover sacrifices did not have to be done at the tabernacle/ temple, then why did they have to wait until their return to keep the Passover?

Jesus' disciples could not have sacrificed and prepared the Passover lamb unless they did it at the temple. But they could not do it at the temple because they weren't priests. They couldn't just walk into the temple courtyard and begin sacrificing. Also, as we have previously shown, the crucifixion site was laid out in the same pattern as the tabernacle, which was first erected about 1500 years before the crucifixion. If the disciples would have done it in another location, it would have corrupted the pattern that God had established through the pattern of the tabernacle/temple, which pointed to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Was Jesus' Meal With the Disciples a Passover Meal

“And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said to them, With desire [1939, *desire for what is forbidden*] I have desired to eat this Passover with you **before I suffer**” (Luke 22:15). *Strong's* 1939 is used thirty seven times in the New Testament, **and it always means that which is forbidden!** It is usually translated as “lust.”

The apostle Paul said to the Philippians, “For I am in a strait between two, having a desire [1939, *desire for what is forbidden*] **to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**: nevertheless **to abide in the flesh is more needful for you**. And having this confidence, I know that I **shall abide and continue with you**...” (Philippians 1:23 - 25). Paul desired to depart the flesh, and be with Christ, but he knew his desire was not possible at that time. His desire was forbidden.

In another example, Paul said, “But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire [1939, *desire for what is forbidden*]. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; **but Satan hindered** [1465, *impeded, detained*] **us**” (1 Thes. 2:17, 18). In this example it was Satan that prevented Paul from fulfilling his desire. That is why that specific Greek word [1939] was used. He was prevented from doing that which he desired.

If the meal that Jesus was eating with His disciples was the Passover, then He wasn't forbidden from eating it. "...[T]he Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayedwhen He had supped [1172, *dined*] ..." (1 Corinthians 11:23, 25). Jesus had eaten the meal. He wasn't forbidden from eating that meal with His disciples.

The only way this makes sense is if this **wasn't the Passover meal**. What does the Word of God say about this particular meal? "Now **before** [4253, *in front of, prior to*] **the Feast of the Passover**, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father...**And supper being ended...**" (John 13:1, 2). The meal that they had been eating on the night of the fourteenth was **before the Passover meal**. According to the plain truth as revealed by the scriptures, that was **not** the Passover meal. That scenario fits with the Old Testament scriptures that make it plain that the Passover meal was on the night of the fifteenth.

It was **impossible** for Jesus to eat the Passover that year, because **He was the Passover sacrifice**. He died at the ninth hour at the very instant the priests were to begin killing the Passover sacrifices at the temple. By the time of the Passover meal on the night of the fifteenth, Jesus was dead and buried in Joseph's tomb. That is why He was "forbidden" to eat the Passover meal that year.

The Bread And The Wine

While they were eating, Jesus "... took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the **New Testament in My blood**, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19, 20). That cup was not the New Testament in His blood, but it pointed to what was coming.

"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. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood" (Heb. 9:16-18). Without Jesus' death there is no New Testament, and without His death there cannot be a New Testament Passover ceremony!

The bread and wine were **not** done in remembrance of Jesus at that time because He had not yet died. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show [2605, *proclaim, promulgate*] **the Lord's death** till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The symbols of the bread and the wine are symbols of Jesus' death, **but He was not dead when He presented them** on the night of the fourteenth. They pointed to His crucifixion that was to take place during the daytime on the fourteenth.

Jesus was teaching His disciples what was to be done after His death. He was going to fulfill the Passover sacrifice; therefore, under the New Covenant, the Passover sacrifices were no longer going to be necessary, because Jesus "... offered one sacrifice for sins forever..." (Hebrews 10:12). The sacrifices under the Old Covenant pointed to Jesus' death. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (v. 1). The animal sacrifices could not take away sin. They were only temporary "... until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:10).

The wine and the bread were to replace the yearly Passover sacrifices. For, "...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**" (Hebrews 10:10). What better time to teach this fact than just before His death. This is why it was absolutely crucial that Jesus fulfill the timing of the Passover sacrifice as it had been established under the Old Covenant; otherwise, what proof do we have that He had actually fulfilled it?

We have established that the Passover ceremony was held on the night of the fifteenth. When we look at the New Testament Scriptures concerning Passover, **they must be examined in the light of the Old Testament**. The fourteenth Passover ceremony is **not a Passover ceremony**. It is a counterfeit, and a fraud, that has been perpetrated on God's people through deception. How did this happen?

The Fourteenth Passover in the Early Church

The early congregations were warned that "... there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in [3919, *secretly, craftily*] damnable [684, *destructive*] heresies [139, *choices*], even denying [720, *to contradict, disavow*] the Lord that bought them ... by reason of whom **the way of truth shall be evil spoken of**" (2 Peter 2:1, 2). Their teachings contradicted the teachings of Jesus, which is a denial of Him, and they also spoke evil of the truth.

Notice how the fourteenth Passover began to infiltrate into the congregations of God. "While the Christians of Palestine, who kept the whole Jewish law, celebrated of course all the Jewish festivals, the heathen converts observed only the Sabbath, and, in remembrance of closing scenes of our Savior's life, the Passover, though without the Jewish superstitions.—*Church History, Apostolic Age to A.D. 70, Sec. 29; Lewis Hist. S & S., page 135*".² The Passover ceremony was changed from the 15th, an annual holy day, to the 14th, which is not a holy day. Thus the annual holy days were dropped.

The Passover ceremony became an observance "in memory of our Savior's **life,**" **instead of His death**. This new Passover ceremony, which wasn't a Passover ceremony at all, changed the day from the fifteenth, which is after His death, to the night of the fourteenth, in remembrance of His life.

Passover is not about Jesus' life. It is about His death. "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's **death** till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). We are not saved by His life, but by His shed blood. We "... have redemption [629, *deliverance procured through payment of a ransom*] **through His blood**, even the forgiveness [859, *deliverance from captivity*] of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Changing the ceremony to the 14th effectively did away with the real meaning of Passover, and transformed it into a different observance with a different emphasis.

In due time, this change to the fourteenth led to the Quartodeciman controversy, which was not about the true Passover ceremony on the fifteenth, but rather the timing of the pagan festival of Easter. The question was, should Easter be kept on the fourteenth day of the moon, no matter which day of the week it fell, or should it always be observed on Sunday? There is a direct connection between the fourteenth Passover and Easter. This controversy was **not among**

² A.N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd, *A History of the True Religion*, 3rd edn. 1972, Reprinted 1990, p. 47.

the congregations of God which had held onto the truth. It was among the so-called early church fathers who were bringing pagan doctrines into their churches.

The Eternal took Ezekiel (in a vision) on a tour of the temple. The temple is a type of the congregations of God. “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God...” (2 Corinthians 6:16). The Eternal “... brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD’S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women **weeping for Tammuz**” (Ezekiel 8:14). Who is Tammuz, and why were they weeping?

“The cult of Tammuz, under the west-Semitic name of Adoni (my lord) and the Greek equivalent Adonis, was widespread throughout the Mediterranean world. According to still extant mythology, Tammuz died, descended to the lower world, was resurrected, and ascended again to earth and then to heaven.... Because of his close association with the realm of nature, the fields, and animals, he was called ‘the shepherd.’”³ Clearly Tammuz is a counterfeit of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who died, was buried, resurrected, and ascended into heaven.

The Passover services that are held on the fourteenth are observing “the closing scenes of our Savior’s life,” just as the heathen converts in the early churches did. The churches of God call Passover the most solemn service of the year. The meaning of solemn, as they use it, means “somber,” i.e. dark, gloomy, dismal, and sad. That is the atmosphere in which their Passover services are held.

This somber “Passover” service follows the same pattern as the weeping for Tammuz. “According to the legends, after he was slain, he went into the underworld. But through the weeping of his “MOTHER”, Ishtar (Easter), he mystically was revived. And the sign of his supposed coming to life again, was represented in the springing forth of the vegetation—in Spring!”⁴

Is the Passover ceremony supposed to be a “somber” service? Our Passover takes place at our baptism, when we “...**Repent**, and [are] **baptized** ... in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission** [859, *liberty, deliverance, pardon*] **of sins** ...” (Acts 2:38). The Passover ceremony is a reminder each year of our deliverance from sin and death.

The Passover **is to be a time of thanksgiving and joy!** “And this day [*the 15th, Passover*] shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep [2287, *to move in a circle, dance, celebrate*] it a feast [2282, *festive, festival*] to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast [2287] by an ordinance forever” (Ex. 12:14). Passover is a time to remember our redemption with thanksgiving and joy.

Notice how *Strong’s* 2287 is used when the Amalekites were celebrating their victory. They were “... eating and drinking, and **dancing** [2287], because of all the great spoil they had taken ...” (1 Samuel 30:16). They weren’t somber; on the contrary, they were celebrating.

Instead of a time of thanksgiving and joy, a fourteenth Passover is a time of somberness. By turning Passover into a time of mourning, and having a funeral service atmosphere, we are celebrating our redemption exactly the way that Satan would want us to.

Notice how the fourteenth Passover has presented questions in the minds of some. “Why God chose not to make this day a formal holy day is not entirely clear. Some day we will know.

³Stephen D. Simmons, ‘Mesopotamia: Ancient Civilization,’ *Colliers Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, Cromwell Collier and MacMillan, Inc. 1967, p. 749.

⁴Ralph Woodrow, ‘*Babylon Mystery Religion*’, Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, Riverside, CA, 1966, p. 157.

However, whether at home, at school, or at work on the day of the Passover, everyone, including children, should treat the day with a proper level of reverence and thoughtfulness, remembering our Savior's experience for us on that day in AD 31."⁵

The simple answer is that God did make Passover a holy day, but you have to celebrate it on the correct day. When you begin with a faulty premise, then you must continue misinterpreting scriptures in order to try to fit them into your original premise. This type of reasoning is called "circular reasoning," which is "a fault in reasoning in which the premise and the conclusion are each in turn used to prove the other."

⁵ "What is the Passover Anyway?", *Forerunner*, March-April 2006, © 2006 Church of the Great God, Charlotte, NC