

# Why Isn't Passover a Holy Day?

---

This is a question that has been asked over the years, as indicated by the quote below. The answer is really quite simple, as we shall see.

“Why God chose not to make this day [*Passover*] a formal holy day is not entirely clear. Some day we will know. 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.”<sup>1</sup>

The Passover ceremony is the most important of God's **commanded assemblies** because it pictures our first step in God's plan of salvation, without which we would still be dead in sin. Without Passover Israel would not have been able to leave Egypt (sin).

What is a commanded assembly? “A ‘convocation’ is an assembly of the people where their presence is commanded, under power and authority. A ‘holy convocation’ is a religious assembly, for purposes of worship. The weekly Sabbath is a holy convocation. So is Abib 15<sup>th</sup>. **Our presence is commanded under God's power and authority** [*emphasis mine*].”<sup>2</sup>

The Passover ceremony is an assembly commanded by God for purposes of worship. That is the definition of a holy convocation. All of God's holy convocations are, **without exception**, on holy days. The two cannot be separated. Therefore the Passover ceremony has to be on a holy day.

Why isn't the Passover ceremony on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib a holy day? Because the 14<sup>th</sup> is a preparation day on which the Passover sacrifices were killed. “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even [lit. *between the evenings*] is the LORD'S Passover” (Lev. 23:5). What was to take place “between the evenings”? The congregation of Israel “...shall kill it in the evening [lit. *between the evenings*]” (Exodus 12:6). The 14<sup>th</sup> was the day the Passover was to be killed “between the evenings.” The killing of the Passover is not the ceremony. It was done in preparation for the ceremony.

There are two primary interpretations of “between the evenings.” One is twilight. Another is the midpoint between solar noon and sunset. In the New Testament, solar noon is the 6<sup>th</sup> hour, and the midpoint between the 6<sup>th</sup> hour and sunset is the 9<sup>th</sup> hour, or about 3:00 P.M.

We no longer perform the Passover sacrifices “between the evenings” on the 14<sup>th</sup> because “Christ our Passover [*was*] sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). The crucifixion began at the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour of the day, or about 9:00 A.M. (Mark 15:25). At the 6<sup>th</sup> hour (noon) the land became darkened

---

<sup>1</sup> Staff, *Forerunner Magazine*, *What is Passover Anyway*, Ready Answer, March-April 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert W. Armstrong, *Pagan Holidays—or God's Holy Days—Which?*, © 1974, Ambassador College Press, p. 18.

until the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (about 3:00 P.M.), when Jesus died (Matt. 27:45-50; Mk. 15:33-41; Lk. 23:44-49). Christ our Passover did not die at twilight, but at the midpoint between noon and sunset.

Darkness symbolizes sin. At the 6<sup>th</sup> hour the sins of man were placed on the head of Jesus. (Man's number in scripture is six.) By taking on the sins of man Jesus became sin, and **sin cannot remove sin**. It was only after Jesus' death that sin could be removed, "For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7). **Sin caused Jesus' death**, and after He died sin was removed.

**After Jesus was dead**, "...one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and **forthwith came there out blood and water**" (John 19:33, 34). The scriptures are clear that "...**without shedding of blood is no remission** [859, *forgiveness, pardon*]" (Hebrews 9:22). Until Jesus' death and the shedding of His blood there could not be any forgiveness of sins. The plain simple truth is this: the Passover ceremony was never held prior to the death of the Passover. Therefore the Passover ceremony could not have been held prior to Jesus' death at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour.

Jesus was buried, "And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on" (Luke 23:54). Jesus crucifixion, death, and burial took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib, which is a preparation day for the holy day that is on the 15<sup>th</sup>. "And on the fifteenth day of the [*first*] month is the feast of unleavened bread to the LORD: **seven days** you must eat unleavened bread. **In the first day you shall have a holy convocation...**" (Lev. 23:5). The 14<sup>th</sup> is a common day, a work day, a preparation day for the holy day. **There is no commanded observance on the fourteenth!**

The apostle Paul tells us, "...For even **Christ our Passover is 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 Cor. 5:7, 8). Did you notice the order of Paul's statement: first is the sacrifice, which was on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and then the feast follows on the 15<sup>th</sup>?

But, didn't Jesus keep the Passover the night before His death? No! Jesus' death, as the fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice, was going to change the manner of the Passover ceremony forever. Jesus' death was going to take away the animal sacrifices, which were "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things..." (Heb. 10:1). Without the sacrifice of the lamb, how was Passover going to be observed under the New Covenant?

On the night before His death, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is **My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission** [859] **of sins**" (Matt. 26:27, 28).

Jesus was teaching His disciples how Passover was to be observed after His death. That meal that they were eating was "...**before the Feast of the Passover**, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of the world...**and supper being ended...**" (John 13:1, 2).

Had Jesus shed His blood at that time? No! Was He dead at that time? No! Therefore His blood of the New Testament, which was to be shed for the remission of sins, had not yet been shed, and could not remove anyone's sins. His death and blood were required to bring about 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 plain truth is that Passover is a holy day, but you have to observe it on the correct day. A commanded assembly on a day that is not a holy day is not from God. Where did it come from? Herbert Armstrong followed the teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day), of which he was a minister for many years. They kept the so-called Lord's Supper on the eve of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Armstrong instituted the Lord's Supper into his church based on CG 7's teaching, not on Biblical teaching. He just changed the name of it to Passover.

It is the responsibility of each person to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). All men are fallible, so we do not follow a man or a church, but we are to follow the truth. "God is a spirit: and they who worship Him **must worship Him in spirit and in truth**" (John 4:24).